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HANSARD'S

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES:

THIRD SERIES,

COMMENCING WITH THE ACCESSION OF

WILLIAM IV.

9° VICTORIÆ, 1846.

VOL. LXXXIII.

COMPRISING THE PERIOD FROM

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF JANUARY,

TO

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF FEBRUARY, 1846.

First Volume of the Session.

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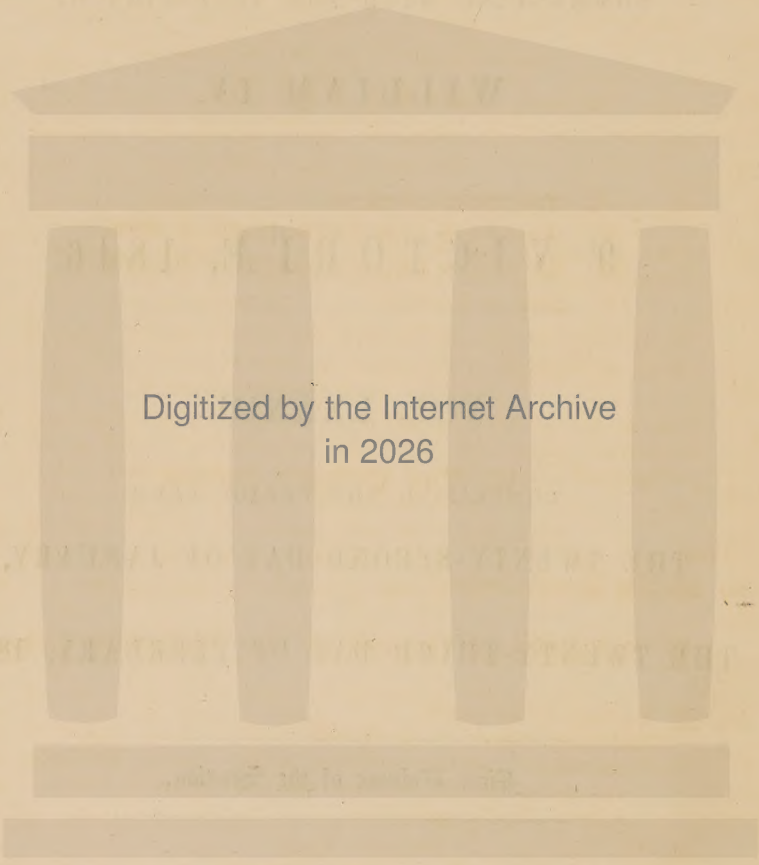
1846.



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THE CABINET.

First Lord of the Treasury	Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart.
Lord Chancellor	Lord Lyndhurst.
President of the Council	Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry.
Lord Privy Seal	Earl of Haddington.
First Lord of the Admiralty	Earl of Ellenborough.
Commander in Chief	Duke of Wellington.
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Colonial Secretary	Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone
President of the Board of Control	Earl of Ripon.
Secretary-at-War	Right Hon. Sidney Herbert.
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Lord Granville Charles Henry Somerset.
First Commissioner of Land Revenue	Earl of Lincoln.
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Right Hon. Henry Goulburn.

NOT OF THE CABINET.

Postmaster-General	Earl of St. Germans.
President of the Board of Trade	Earl of Dalhousie.
Vice-President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint	Right Hon. Sir George Clerk, Bart.
Paymaster-General	Right Hon. William Bingham Baring.
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Solicitor-General	Sir FitzRoy Kelly.

IRELAND.

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Lord Chancellor	Right Hon. Sir Edward Sugden.
Chief Secretary	Right Hon. Sir Thomas Francis Fremantle.
Attorney-General	Right Hon. Thomas Berry Cusack Smith.
Solicitor-General	Richard Wilson Greene.

SCOTLAND.

Lord Advocate	Duncan McNeil, Esq.
Solicitor-General	Adam Anderson, Esq.

HOUSEHOLD APPOINTMENTS.

Lord Steward	Earl of Liverpool.
Lord Chamberlain	Earl De Lawarr.
Master of the Horse	Earl of Jersey.

ROLL OF THE

LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,

IN THE *SIXTH SESSION* OF THE *FOURTEENTH PARLIAMENT* OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF *GREAT BRITAIN* AND *IRELAND*.

9° VICTORIÆ, 1846.

His Royal Highness THE PRINCE OF WALES.

His Royal Highness ERNEST AUGUSTUS Duke of CUMBERLAND and TEVIOTDALE. (*King of Hanover.*)

His Royal Highness ADOLPHUS FREDERICK Duke of CAMBRIDGE.

WILLIAM Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

JOHN SINGLETON Lord LYNDHURST, *Lord Chancellor.*

EDWARD Archbishop of YORK.

JOHN GEORGE Archbishop of ARMAGH.

WALTER FRANCIS Earl of DONCASTER (*Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury*), *Lord President of the Council.*

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EDWARD ADOLPHUS Duke of SOMERSET.

CHARLES Duke of RICHMOND.

HENRY Duke of GRAFTON.

HENRY Duke of BEAUFORT.

WILLIAM AUBREY DE VERE Duke of SAINT ALBANS.

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ALEXANDER Duke of BRANDON. (*Duke of Hamilton.*)

WILLIAM HENRY CAVENDISH Duke of PORTLAND.

GEORGE Duke of MANCHESTER.

HENRY PELHAM Duke of NEWCASTLE.

HUGH Duke of NORTHUMBERLAND.

ARTHUR Duke of WELLINGTON.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET Duke of BUCKINGHAM AND CHANDOS.

GEORGE GRANVILLE Duke of SUTHERLAND.

HENRY Duke of CLEVELAND.

JOHN Marquess of WINCHESTER.

GEORGE Marquess of TWEEDDALE. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

HENRY Marquess of LANSDOWNE.

GEORGE FERRARS Marquess TOWNSHEND.

JAMES BROWNLOW WILLIAM Marquess of SALISBURY.

JOHN ALEXANDER Marquess of BATH.

JAMES Marquess of ABERCORN.

RICHARD Marquess of HERTFORD.

JOHN Marquess of BUTE.

WILLIAM Marquess of THOMOND. (*Lord Tadcaster.*) (*Elected for Ireland.*)

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GEORGE CHARLES Marquess CAMDEN.

HENRY WILLIAM Marquess of ANGLESEY.

GEORGE HORATIO Marquess of CHOLMONDELEY.

Paulyn Reginald Serlo Marquess of Hastings.

Charles Marquess of Ailesbury.

George Thomas John Marquess of Westmeath. (*Elected for Ireland.*)

Frederick William Marquess of Bristol.

Archibald Marquess of Ailsa.

John Marquess of Breadalbane.

Richard Marquess of Westminster.

Constantine Henry Marquess of Normanby.

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John Earl of Shrewsbury.

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Francis Theophilus Henry Earl of Huntingdon.

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William Earl of Devon.

Thomas Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire.

William Basil Percy Earl of Denbigh.

John Earl of Westmoreland.

George Augustus Frederick Albemarle Earl of Lindsey.

George Harry Earl of Stamford and Warrington.

George William Earl of Winchilsea and Nottingham.

George Earl of Chesterfield.

Henry Earl of Thanet.

John William Earl of Sandwich.

Arthur Algernon Earl of Essex.

James Thomas Earl of Cardigan.

George Earl of Carlisle.

Walter Francis Earl of Doncaster. (*Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury.*) (*In another place as Lord President of the Council.*)

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——— Earl of Berkeley.

Montagu Earl of Abingdon.

John Savile Earl of Scarbrough.

William Charles Earl of Albemarle.

George William Earl of Coventry.

George Earl of Jersey.

John Earl Poulett.

George Sholto Earl of Morton. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

Cospatrick Alexander Earl of Home. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

David Earl of Airlie. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

David Earl of Leven and Melville. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

Dunbar James Earl of Selkirk. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

Thomas John Earl of Orkney. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

Francis William Earl of Seafield. (*Elected for Scotland.*)

Edward Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer.

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William Earl of Dartmouth.

Charles Augustus Earl of Tankerville.

Heneage Earl of Aylesford.

George Augustus Earl Cowper.

Philip Henry Earl Stanhope.

Robert Earl of Harborough.

Thomas Earl of Macclesfield.

George William Richard Earl of Pomfret.

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James Earl Cornwallis.

Charles Philip Earl of Hardwicke.

Henry Stephen Earl of Ilchester.

George John Earl De Lawarr. (*In another place as Lord Chamberlain of the Household.*)

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Frederick Earl Spencer.

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William David Earl of Mansfield in Middlesex. (*In another place as Earl of Mansfield in the County of Nottingham.*)
Henry John George Earl of Carnarvon.
Charles Cecil Cope Earl of Liverpool. (*In another place as Lord Steward of the Household.*)
George Earl Cadogan.
James Howard Earl of Malmesbury.
Francis William Earl of Charlemont. (*Lord Charlemont.*) (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Stephen Earl of Mount Cashell. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
John Earl of Mayo. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
John Earl of Erne. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
William Earl of Wicklow. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
George Charles Earl of Lucan. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
James Earl of Bandon. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
James Dupré Earl of Caledon. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
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William Earl of Rosse. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Charles William Earl of Charleville. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
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William Earl of Lonsdale.
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George William Lord Stafford.
George Anson Lord Byron.
William Lord Ward.
Hugh Charles Lord Clifford of Chudleigh.
Alexander George Lord Saltoun. (*Elected for Scotland.*)
Charles Lord Sinclair. (*Elected for Scotland.*)
John Lord Colville of Culross. (*Elected for Scotland.*)
Eric Lord Reay. (*Elected for Scotland.*)
John Lord Rollo. (*Elected for Scotland.*)
Henry Francis Lord Polwarth. (*Elected for Scotland.*)
Edmund Lord Boyle. (*Earl of Cork and Orrery.*)
Thomas Robert Lord Hay. (*Earl of Kinnoul.*)

Digby Lord Middleton.
William John Lord Monson.
Henry Lord Montfort.
George William Frederick Lord Bruce.
John William Lord Ponsonby. (*Earl of Bessborough.*)
George John Lord Sondes.
Nathaniel Lord Scarsdale.
George Lord Boston.
Henry Edward Lord Holland.
George James Lord Lovel and Holland. (*Earl of Egmont.*)
George John Lord Vernon.
John Douglas Edward Henry Lord Sundridge. (*Duke of Argyll.*)
Edward William Lord Hawke.
Thomas Henry Lord Foley.
George Talbot Lord Dynevor.
Thomas Lord Walsingham.
William Lord Bagot.
Charles Lord Southampton.
Fletcher Lord Grantley.
Spencer Lord Rodney.
John Lord Carteret.
Richard Noel Lord Berwick.
John Lord Sherborne.
Henry Lord Tyrone. (*Marquess of Waterford.*)
Richard Lord Carleton. (*Earl of Shannon.*)
Edward Lord Suffield.
Guy Lord Dorchester.
George Lord Kenyon.
Richard Lord Braybrooke.
George Hamilton Lord Fisherwick. (*Marquess of Donegal.*)
Charles Lord Douglas of Douglas.
Henry Hall Lord Gage. (*Viscount Gage.*)
Edward Thomas Lord Thurlow.
George William Lord Lyttleton.
Henry Lord Mendip (*Viscount Clifden.*)
Francis Lord Stuart of Castle Stuart. (*Earl of Moray.*)
Randolph Lord Stewart of Garlies. (*Earl of Galloway.*)
James Thomas Lord Saltersford. (*Earl of Courtown.*)
George Alan Lord Brodrick. (*Viscount Midleton.*)
George Lord Calthorpe.
Robert John Lord Carrington.
Henry Lord Bayning.
William Powlett Lord Bolton.
John Lord Wodehouse.
John Lord Northwick.
Thomas Atherton Lord Lilford.
Thomas Lord Ribblesdale.
John Lord Fitzgibbon. (*Earl of Clare.*)
Edward Wadding Lord Dunsany. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Cadwallader Davis Lord Blayney. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Henry Lord Farnham. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Robert Lord Clonbrock. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Edward Lord Crofton. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Henry Lord Dunalley. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
Henry Francis Seymour Lord Moore. (*Marquess of Drogheda.*)
John Henry Loftus Lord Loftus. (*Marquess of Ely.*)
John Lord Carysfort. (*Earl of Carysfort.*)
William Lord Alvanley.
George Ralph Lord Abercromby.
John Thomas Lord Redesdale.
George Lord Rivers.
Arthur Moyses William Lord Sandys.
George Augustus Frederick Charles Lord Sheffield. (*Earl of Sheffield.*)
David Montagu Lord Erskine.
George John Lord Mont Eagle. (*Marquess of Sligo.*)
Archibald William Lord Ardrossan. (*Earl of Eglintoun.*)
James Lord Lauderdale. (*Earl of Lauderdale.*)
George Arthur Hastings Lord Granard. (*Earl of Granard.*)
Hungerford Lord Crewe.
Alan Legge Lord Gardner.
John Thomas Lord Manners.
John Alexander Lord Hopetoun. (*Earl of Hopetoun.*)
Richard Lord Castlemaine. (*Elected for Ireland.*)
James Andrew Lord Dalhousie. (*Earl of Dalhousie.*)
George Lord Meldrum. (*Marquess of Huntly.*)
James Lord Ross. (*Earl of Glasgow.*)
William Willoughby Lord Grinstead. (*Earl of Enniskillen.*)
William Henry Tennison Lord Foxford. (*Earl of Limerick.*)

FRANCIS GEORGE Lord CHURCHILL.

WILLIAM Lord MELBOURNE. (*Viscount Melbourne.*)

GEORGE FRANCIS ROBERT Lord HARRIS.

ALGERNON Lord PRUDHOE.

CHARLES Lord COLCHESTER.

WILLIAM SCHOMBERG ROBERT Lord KER. (*Marquess of Lothian.*)

FRANCIS NATHANIEL Lord MINSTER. (*Marquess Conyngham.*)

JOHN Lord ORMONDE. (*Marquess of Ormonde.*)

FRANCIS Lord WEMYSS. (*Earl of Wemyss.*)

ROBERT Lord CLANBRASSILL. (*Earl of Roden.*)

ROBERT Lord KINGSTON. (*Earl of Kingston.*)

EDWARD MICHAEL Lord SILCHESTER. (*Earl of Longford.*)

GEORGE AUGUSTUS FREDERICK JOHN Lord GLENLYON.

WILLIAM Lord MARYBOROUGH. (*Earl of Mornington.*)

JOHN Lord ORIEL. (*Viscount Massarene and Ferrard.*)

THOMAS HENRY Lord RAVENSWORTH.

THOMAS Lord DELAMERE.

JOHN GEORGE WELD Lord FORESTER.

JOHN JAMES Lord RAYLEIGH.

ULYSSES Lord DOWNES. (*Elected for Ireland.*)

NICHOLAS Lord BEXLEY.

ROBERT FRANCIS Lord GIFFORD.

PERCY CLINTON SYDNEY Lord PENSHURST. (*Viscount Strangford.*)

WILLIAM Lord TADCASTER. (*In another place as Marquess of Thomond.*)

ULICK JOHN Lord SOMERHILL. (*Marquess of Clanricarde.*)

JAMES Lord WIGAN. (*Earl of Balcarres.*)

THOMAS Lord RANFURLY. (*Earl of Ranfurly.*)

GEORGE Lord DE TABLEY.

JOHN Lord WHARNCLIFFE.

WILLIAM Lord FEVERSHAM.

JOHN SINGLETON Lord LYNDHURST. (*In another place as Lord Chancellor.*)

JAMES Lord FIFE. (*Earl of Fife.*)

JOHN HENRY Lord TENTERDEN.

WILLIAM CONYNGHAM Lord PLUNKET.

THOMAS Lord MELROS. (*Earl of Haddington.*) (*In another place as Lord Privy Seal.*)

HENRY Lord COWLEY.

WILLIAM Lord HEYTESBURY.

ARCHIBALD JOHN Lord ROSEBERY. (*Earl of Rosebery.*)

RICHARD Lord CLANWILLIAM. (*Earl of Clanwilliam.*)

EDWARD Lord SKELMERSDALE.

WILLIAM SAMUEL Lord WYNFORD.

HENRY Lord BROUGHAM and VAUX.

WILLIAM GEORGE Lord KILMARNOCK. (*Earl of Erroll.*)

ARTHUR JAMES Lord FINGALL. (*Earl of Fingall.*)

CHARLES WILLIAM Lord SEFTON. (*Earl of Sefton.*)

NATHANIEL Lord CLEMENTS. (*Earl of Leitrim.*

GEORGE WILLIAM FOX Lord ROSSIE. (*Lord Kinnaird.*)

THOMAS Lord KENLIS. (*Marquess of Headfort.*)

JOHN CHAMBRE Lord CHAWORTH. (*Earl of Meath.*)

CHARLES ADOLPHUS Lord DUNMORE. (*Earl of Dunmore.*)

ROBERT MONTGOMERY Lord HAMILTON. (*Lord Belhaven and Stenton.*)

JOHN HOBART Lord HOWDEN.

WILLIAM Lord PANMURE.

GEORGE WARWICK Lord POLTIMORE.

EDWARD PRICE Lord MOSTYN.

HENRY SPENCER Lord TEMPLEMORE.

WILLIAM LEWIS Lord DINORBEN.

VALENTINE BROWNE Lord CLONCURRY.

JAMES Lord DE SAUMEREZ.

FRANCIS GODOLPHIN Lord GODOLPHIN.

LUCIUS Lord HUNSDON. (*Viscount Falkland.*)

EDWARD GEOFFERY Lord STANLEY.

THOMAS Lord DENMAN.

ROBERT CAMPBELL Lord ABINGER.

PHILIP CHARLES Lord DE L'ISLE and DUDLEY.

ALEXANDER Lord ASHBURTON.

CHARLES Lord GLENELG.

EDWARD JOHN Lord HATHERTON.

JOHN Lord STRAFFORD.

ARCHIBALD Lord WORLINGHAM. (*In another place as Earl of Gosford.*)

CHARLES CHRISTOPHER Lord COTTENHAM.

HENRY Lord LANGDALE.

EDWARD BERKELEY Lord PORTMAN.

THOMAS ALEXANDER Lord LOVAT.

WILLIAM Lord BATEMAN.

FRANCIS WILLIAM Lord CHARLEMONT. (*In another place as Earl of Charlemont.*)

Francis Alexander Lord Kintore. (*Earl of Kintore.*)
Cornelius Lord Lismore. (*Viscount Lismore.*
Henry Robert Lord Rossmore.
Robert Shapland Lord Carew.
William Francis Spencer Lord De Mauley.
John Lord Wrottesley.
Charles Lord Sudeley.
Paul Lord Methuen.
Frederic James Lord Beauvale.
Richard Wogan Lord Furnival. (*Lord Talbot of Malahide.*
John Thomas Lord Stanley of Alderley.
Henry Lord Stuart de Decies.
Chandos Lord Leigh.
Paul Beilby Lord Wenlock.
Charles Lord Lurgan.
Nicholas William Lord Colborne.
Arthur Lord De Freyne.
James Lord Dunfermline.
Thomas Lord Monteagle of Brandon.
John Lord Seaton.
Edward Arthur Wellington Lord Keane.
John Lord Campbell.
John Lord Oxenfoord. (*Earl of Stair.*)
Valentine Lord Kenmare. (*Earl of Kenmare.*)
Charles Crespigny Lord Vivian.
John Lord Congleton.
Charles Theophilus Lord Metcalfe.

Mem.—*According to the Usage of Parliament, when the House appoints a Select Committee, the Lords appointed to serve upon it are named in the Order of their Rank, beginning with the Highest; and so, when the House sends a Committee to a Conference with the Commons, the Lord highest in Rank is called first, and the rest go forth in like Order: But when the Whole House is called over for any Purpose within the House, or for the Purpose of proceeding forth to Westminster Hall, or upon any public Solemnity, the Call begins invariably with the Junior Baron.*

LIST OF THE COMMONS.

LIST OF MEMBERS

RETURNED FROM THE RESPECTIVE COUNTIES, CITIES, TOWNS, AND BOROUGHS, TO THE *FOURTEENTH PARLIAMENT* OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF *GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND*: AMENDED TO THE OPENING OF THE *SIXTH SESSION*, ON THE 22ND DAY OF JANUARY, 1846.

ABINGDON.
Sir Frederic Thesiger, knt.

ANDOVER.
Ralph Etwall,
Hon. (William Paget) Lord W. Paget.

ANGLESEY.
Hon. William Owen Stanley.

ARUNDEL.
Hon. Henry Granville (Howard) Earl of Arundel and Surrey.

ASHBURTON.
James Matheson.

ASHTON-UNDER-LINE.
Charles Hindley.

AYLESBURY.
Charles John Baillie Hamilton,
Rice Richard Clayton.

BANBURY.
Henry William Tancred.

BARNSTAPLE.
Frederick Hodgson,
Montague Gore.

BATH.
Hon. Adam (Duncan) Viscount Duncan,
John Arthur Roebuck.

BEAUMARIS.
Frederick Paget.

BEDFORD.
Frederick Polhill,
Henry Stuart.

BEDFORDSHIRE.
Hon. John Hume (Cust) Viscount Alford,
William Astell.

BERKSHIRE.
Robert Palmer,
Philip Pusey,
Rt. hon. William Keppel Viscount Barrington.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED.
Richard Hodgson,
Matthew Forster.

BEVERLEY.
John Towneley,
James Weir Hogg.

BEWDLEY.
Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, bt.

BIRMINGHAM.
George Frederick Muntz,
Richard Spooner.

BLACKBURN.
William Fielden,
John Hornby.

BODMIN.
John Dunn Gardner.

BOLTON-LE-MOORS.
Peter Ainsworth,
John Bowring.

BOSTON.
John Studholme Brownrigg,
Sir James Duke, knt.

BRADFORD.
John Hardy,
William Busfeild.

BRECKNOCKSHIRE.
Thomas Wood.

BRECKNOCK.
Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan.

BRIDGENORTH.
Thos. Charlton Whitmore,
Sir Robert Pigot, bt.

BRIDGEWATER.
Henry Broadwood,
Thomas Seaton Forman.

BRIDPORT.
Thomas Alexander Mitchell,
Alexander Dundas Rose Wishart Baillie Cochrane.

BRIGHTON.
George Richard Pechell,
Hon. (Alfred Hervey) Lord A. Hervey.

BRISTOL.
Philip William Skynner Miles,
Hon. Francis Henry Fitzhardinge Berkeley.

BUCKINGHAM.
Rt. hon. Sir Thomas Francis Fremantle, bt.,
John Hall.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.
Caledon George Du Pré,
Christopher Tower,
Hon. William Edward Fitzmaurice.

BURY.
Richard Walker.

BURY ST. EDMUND'S.
Hon. Frederick William (Hervey) Earl Jermyn,
Rt. Hon. (Charles Fitzroy) Lord C. Fitzroy.

CALNE.
Hon. Henry (Petty Fitzmaurice) Earl of Shelburne.

CAMBRIDGE.
Hon. John Henry Thomas Manners Sutton,
Sir Fitz Roy Kelly, knt.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE.
Hon. Eliot Thomas Yorke,
Richard Jefferson Eaton,
John Peter Alix.

CAMBRIDGE (UNIVERSITY).
Rt. hon. Henry Goulburn,
Hon. Charles Ewan Law,

CANTERBURY.
Hon. George Augustus Percy Sydney Smythe,
James Bradshaw.

CARDIFF.
Rt. hon. John Iltid Nicholl.

CARDIGAN.
Pryse Pryse.

CARDIGANSHIRE.
William Edward Powell.

CARLISLE.
Philip Henry Howard,
William Marshall.

CARMARTHEN.
David Morris.

CARMARTHENSHIRE.
Hon. George Rice Rice Trevor,
David Arthur Saunders Davies.

CARNARVON.
William Bulkeley Hughes.

CARNARVONSHIRE.
Hon. Edward Gordon Douglas Pennant.

CHATHAM.
Rt. hon. George Stevens Byng.

CHELTENHAM.
Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley.

CHESHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
William Tatton Egerton,
George Cornwall Legh.
(*Southern Division.*)
Sir Philip de Malpas Grey Egerton, bt.,
John Tollemache.

CHESTER.
Rt. hon. (Robert Grosvenor) Lord R. Grosvenor,
John Jervis.

CHICHESTER.
Hon. (Arthur Lennox) Lord A. Lennox,
John Abel Smith.

CHIPPENHAM.
Joseph Neeld,
Henry George Boldero.

CHRISTCHURCH.
Hon. Edward Alfred John Harris.

CIRENCESTER.
Hon. George Augustus Frederick (Villiers) Viscount Villiers,
William Cripps.

CLITHEROE.
Edward Cardwell.

COCKERMOUTH.
Henry Aglionby Aglionby,
Edward Horsman.

COLCHESTER.
Richard Sanderson,
Sir George Henry Smith, bt.

CORNWALL.
(*Eastern Division.*)
William Henry Pole Carew,
William Rashleigh.
(*Western Division.*)
Edward William Wynne Pendarves,
Sir Charles Lemon, bt.

COVENTRY.
Rt. hon. Edward Ellice,
William Williams.

CRICKLADE.
John Neeld,
Hon. Henry Thomas Howard.

CUMBERLAND.
(*Eastern Division.*)
Hon. Charles Wentworth George Howard,
William James.
(*Western Division.*)
Samuel Irton,
Edward Stanley.

DARTMOUTH.
George Moffat.

DENBIGH.
Townshend Mainwaring.

DENBIGHSHIRE.
Hon. William Bagot,
Sir Watkin Williams Wynn.

DERBY.
Edward Strutt,
Hon. John George Brabazon Ponsonby.

DERBYSHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
Hon. Geo. Henry Cavendish,
William Evans.
(*Southern Division.*)
Edward Miller Mundy,
Charles Robert Colville.

DEVIZES.
William Heald Ludlow Bruges,
George Heneage Walker Heneage.

DEVONPORT.
Henry Tufnell,
Rt. hon. Sir George Grey, bt.

DEVONSHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, bt.,
Lewis William Buck.
(*Southern Division.*)
Sir John Buller Yarde Buller, bt.,
Hon. William Reginald (Courtenay) Visc. Courtenay.

DORCHESTER.
Hon. Anthony Henry Ashley-Cooper,
Rt. hon. Sir James Robert George Graham, bt.

DORSETSHIRE.
Hon. Anthony (Ashley Cooper) Lord Ashley,
Henry Charles Stuart,
George Bankes.

DOVOR.
Sir John Rae Reid, bt.,
Edward Royd Rice.

DROITWICH.
John Somerset Pakington.

DUDLEY.
John Benbow.

DURHAM.
(*Northern Division.*)
Hedworth Lambton,
Hon. Henry Thomas Liddell.
(*Southern Division.*)
Hon. (Harry Vane) Lord H. Vane,
John Bowes.

DURHAM (CITY).
Thomas Colpitts Granger,
John Bright.

ESSEX.
(*Northern Division.*)
Sir John Tyssen Tyrell, bt.,
Charles Gray Round.
(*Southern Division.*)
Thomas William Bramston,
George Palmer.

EVESHAM.
Hon. Arthur (Marcus Cecil Hill) Lord A. M. C. Hill,
Peter Borthwick.

EXETER.
Sir John Thomas Buller Duckworth, bt.,
Edward Divett.

EYE.
Sir Edward Kerrison, bt.

FINSBURY.
Thos. Slingsby Duncombe,
Thomas Wakley.

FLINT.
Sir Richard Bulkeley Williams Bulkeley, bt.

FLINTSHIRE.
Sir Stephen Richard Glynne, bt.

FROME.
Thomas Sheppard.

GATESHEAD.
William Hutt.

GLAMORGANSHIRE.
Hon. Edward Richard Wyndham (Wyndham Quin) Viscount Adare,
Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot.

GLOUCESTER.
John Phillpots,
Hon. Maurice Frederick Fitzhardinge Berkeley.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.
(*Eastern Division.*)
Sir Christopher William Codrington, bt.,
Hon. Francis Charteris.

(*Western Division.*)
Hon. George Charles Grantley Fitzhardinge Berkeley,
Robert Blagden Hale.

GRANTHAM.
Glynne Earle Welby,
Hon. Frederick James Tollemache.

GREENWICH.
James Whitley Deans Dundas,
Edward George Barnard.

GRIMSBY (GREAT).
Edward Heneage.

GUILDFORD.
Ross Donnelly Mangles,
Charles Baring Wall.

HALIFAX.
Edward Protheroe,
Charles Wood.

HAMPSHIRE.
(*Northern Division*).
Rt. hon. Charles Shaw Lefevre,
Sir William Heathcote, bt.

Southern Division).
Hon. (Charles Wellesley) Lord C. Wellesley,
Henry Combe Compton.

HARWICH.
John Attwood,
William Beresford.

HASTINGS.
Musgrave Briscoe,
Robert Hollond.

HAVERFORDWEST.
Sir Richard Bulkeley Philipps Philipps, bt.

HELSTON.
Sir Richard Rawlinson Vyvyan, bt.

HEREFORD.
Sir Robert Price, bt.,
Robert Pulsford.

HEREFORDSHIRE.
Kedgwin Hoskins,
Thomas Baskerville Mynors Baskerville,
Joseph Bailey.

HERTFORD.
Hon. Philip Henry (Stanhope) Viscount Mahon,
Hon. William Francis Cowper.

HERTFORDSHIRE.
Thomas Plumer Halsey,
Abel Smith,
Hon. Granville Dudley Ryder.

HONITON.
Hugh Duncan Baillie,
Forster Alleyne MacGeachy.

HORSHAM.
Robert Henry Hurst.

HUDDERSFIELD.
William Rookes Crompton Stansfield.

HUNTINGDON.
Thomas Baring,
Jonathan Peel.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE.
Edward Fellowes,
George Thornhill.

HYTHE.
Stewart Marjoribanks.

IPSWICH.
John Neilstone Gladstone,
Sackville Lane Fox.

KENDAL.
Henry Warburton.

KENT.
(*Eastern Division.*)
William Deedes,
John Pemberton Plumptre.

(*Western Division.*)
Sir Edmund Filmer, bt.,
Thomas Austen.

KIDDERMINSTER.
Richard Godson.

KING'S LYNN.
Hon. (William George Frederick Cavendish Bentinck) Lord W. G. F. C. Bentinck,
Hon. Robert (Jocelyn) Viscount Jocelyn.

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL.
Sir John Hanmer, bt.,
Sir Walter Charles James, bt.

KNARESBOROUGH.
Andrew Lawson,
William Busfeild Ferrand.

LAMBETH.
Benjamin Hawes,
Rt. Hon. Charles Tennyson D'Eyncourt.

LANCASHIRE.
(*Southern Division.*)
Rt. hon. (Francis Leveson Egerton) Lord F. L. Egerton,
William Entwisle.

(*Northern Division.*)
John Wilson Patten,
John Talbot Clifton.

LANCASTER.
Thomas Greene,
George Marton.

LAUNCESTON.
William Bowles.

LEEDS.
William Beckett,
William Aldam.

LEICESTER.
Sir John Easthope, bt.,
Wynn Ellis.

LEICESTERSHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
Hon. (Charles Henry Somerset Manners) Lord C. H. S. Manners,
Edward Basil Farnham.

(*Southern Division.*)
Sir Henry Halford, bt.,
Charles William Packe.

LEOMINSTER.
Henry Barkly,
George Arkwright.

LEWES.
Hon. Henry Fitzroy,
Howard Elphinstone.

LICHFIELD.
Hon. (Alfred Henry Paget) Lord A. H. Paget,
Hon. Granville George (Leveson Gower) Lord Leveson.

LINCOLN.
Charles De Laet Waldo Sibthorp,
William Rickford Collett.

LINCOLNSHIRE.
(*Parts of Kesteven and Holland.*)
Christopher Turnor,
Sir John Trollope, bt.

(*Parts of Lindsey.*)
Hon. Charles Anderson Worsley (Pelham) Lord Worsley,
Robert Adam Christopher.

LISKEARD.
Charles Buller.

LIVERPOOL.
Hon. Dudley (Ryder) Viscount Sandon,
Sir Howard Douglas, bt.

LONDON.
John Masterman,
James Pattison,
George Lyall,
Rt. hon. (John Russell) Lord J. Russell.

LUDLOW.
Beriah Botfield,
James Ackers.

LYME REGIS.
Thomas Hussey.

LYMINGTON.
John Stewart,
William Alexander Mackinnon.

MACCLESFIELD.
John Brocklehurst,
Thomas Grimsditch.

MAIDSTONE.
Alexander James Beresford Hope,
George Dodd.

MALDON.
Quintin Dick,
John Round.

MALMESBURY.
Hon. James Kenneth Howard.

MALTON.
John Walbanke Childers,
John Evelyn Denison.

MANCHESTER.
Mark Philips,
Thomas Milner Gibson.

MARLBOROUGH.
Hon. (Ernest Augustus Charles Brudenell Bruce) Lord E. A. C. B. Bruce,
Henry Bingham Baring.

MARLOW (GREAT).
Thomas Peers Williams,
Renn Hampden.

MARYLEBONE.
Sir Benjamin Hall, bt.,
Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B.

MERIONETHSHIRE.
Richard Richards.

MERTHYR TYDVIL.
Sir Josiah John Guest, bt.

MIDDLESEX.
George Byng,
Thomas Wood.

MIDHURST.

MONMOUTH.
Reginald James Blewitt.

MONMOUTHSHIRE.
Rt. hon. (Granville Charles Henry Somerset) Lord G. C. H. Somerset,
Charles Octavius Swinnerton Morgan.

MONTGOMERY.
Hon. Hugh Cholmondeley.

MONTGOMERYSHIRE.
Rt. hon. Charles Watkin Williams Wynn.

MORPETH.
Hon. Edward George Granville Howard.

NEWARK-UPON-TRENT.

Hon. (John Manners) Lord J. Manners.

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME.
Edmund Buckley,
John Campbell Colquhoun.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.
William Ord,
John Hodgson Hinde.

NEWPORT.
Charles Wykeham Martin,
William John Hamilton.

NORFOLK.
(*Eastern Division.*)
Edmund Wodehouse,
Henry Negus Burroughes.

(*Western Division.*)
William Bagge,
William Lyde Wiggett Chute,

NORTHALLERTON.
William Battye Wrightson.

NORTHAMPTON.
Rt. Hon. Robert Vernon Smith,
Raikes Currie.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
Thomas Philip Maunsell,
Augustus Stafford O'Brien.

(*Southern Division.*)
William Ralph Cartwright,
Sir Charles Knightley, bt.

NORTHUMBERLAND.
(*Northern Division.*)
Hon. Charles (Bennett) Lord Ossulston,
Addison John Baker Cresswell.

(*Southern Division.*)
Matthew Bell,
Savile Craven Henry Ogle.

NORWICH.
Hon. Arthur Richard (Wellesley) Marquess of Douro,
Benjamin Smith.

NOTTINGHAM.
Rt. Hon. Sir John Cam Hobhouse, bt.,
Thomas Gisborne.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
Thomas Houldsworth,
Henry Gally Knight.

(*Southern Division.*)
Hon. Henry Pelham (Fiennes Pelham Clinton) Earl of Lincoln,
Lancelot Rolleston.

OLDHAM.
John Fielden,
William Augustus Johnson.

OXFORD (CITY).
James Haughton Langston,
Donald Maclean.

OXFORDSHIRE.
Hon. Montague (Bertie) Lord Norreys,
George Granville Harcourt,
Joseph Warner Henley.

OXFORD (UNIVERSITY).
Thomas Grimston Bucknall Estcourt,
Sir Robert Harry Inglis, bt.

PEMBROKE.
Sir John Owen, bt.

PEMBROKESHIRE.
Hon. John Frederick Vaughan (Campbell) Viscount Emlyn.

PENRYN AND FALMOUTH.
Hon. John Cranch Walker Vivian,
James Hanway Plumridge.

PETERBOROUGH.
Hon. George Wentworth Fitzwilliam,
Sir Robert Heron, bt.

PETERSFIELD.
Sir William George Hylton Jolliffe, bt.

PLYMOUTH.
Thomas Gill,
Hon. Hugh (Fortescue) Viscount Ebrington.

PONTEFRACT.
Hon. John Charles George (Saville) Visc. Pollington,
Richard Monckton Milnes.

POOLE.
Hon. Charles Fred. Ashley Cooper Ponsonby,
George Richard Philips.

PORTSMOUTH.
Rt. Hon. Francis Thornhill Baring,
Sir George Thomas Staunton, bt.

PRESTON.
Sir Peter Hesketh Fleetwood, bt.,
Sir George Strickland, bt.

RADNOR (NEW).
Richard Price.

RADNORSHIRE.
Sir John Benn Walsh, bt.

READING.
Charles Russell,
Hon. Henry Charles (Cadogan) Viscount Chelsea.

REIGATE.
Hon. C. Somers (Somers-Cocks) Viscount Eastnor.

RETFORD (EAST).
Hon. Arthur Duncombe,
Granville Harcourt Vernon.

RICHMOND.
Hon. John Charles Dundas,
Hon. William Nicholas Ridley Colborne.

RIPON.
Rt. hon. Thos. Berry Cusack Smith,
Rt. hon. Sir George Cockburn, G.C.B.

ROCHDALE.
William Sharman Crawford.

ROCHESTER.
James Douglas Stoddart Douglas,
William Henry Bodkin.

RUTLANDSHIRE.
Gilbert John Heathcote,
Hon. William Henry Dawnay.

RYE.
Herbert Barrett Curteis.

ST. ALBAN'S.
George William John Repton,
Rt. Hon. William Earl of Listowel.

ST. IVES.
William Tyringham Praed.

SALFORD.
Joseph Brotherton.

SALISBURY.
Ambrose Hussey,
John Henry Campbell.

SALOP, OR SHROPSHIRE.
(Northern Division.)
Hon. Edward (Clive) Viscount Clive,
William Ormsby Gore.

Southern Division.
Hon. Robert Henry Clive,
Hon. Orlando George Chas. (Bridgeman) Viscount Newport.

SANDWICH.
Sir Edward Thomas Troubridge, bt.,
Hugh Hamilton Lindsay.

SCARBOROUGH.
Sir John Vanden Bempde Johnstone, bt.,
Sir Frederick William Trench, knt.

SHAFTESBURY.
Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

SHEFFIELD.
John Parker,
Henry George Ward.

SHIELDS (SOUTH).
John Twizell Wawn.

SHOREHAM (NEW).
Sir Chas. Merrik Burrell, bt.,
Chas. Goring.

SHREWSBURY.
George Tomline,
Benjamin Disraeli.

SOMERSETSHIRE.
(Eastern Division.)
William Gore Langton,
William Miles.

(Western Division.)
Thomas Dyke Acland,
Francis Henry Dickinson.

SOUTHAMPTON.
Humphrey St. John Mildmay,
George William Hope.

SOUTHWARK.
John Humphery,
Sir William Molesworth, bt.

STAFFORD.
Hon. Swinfen Thomas Carnegie,
Edward Buller.

STAFFORDSHIRE.
(Northern Division.)
Jesse David Watts Russell,
Charles Bowyer Adderley.

(Southern Division.)
Hn. Henry John (Chetwynd Talbot) Visc. Ingestre,
Hon. George Anson.

STAMFORD.
Hon. Charles Cecil John (Manners) Marquess of Granby,
Rt. hon. Sir George Clerk, bt.

STOCKPORT.
Henry Marsland,
Richard Cobden.

STOKE-UPON-TRENT.
John Lewis Ricardo,
William Taylor Copeland.

STROUD.
William Henry Stanton,
George Poulett Scrope.

SUDBURY.
(Disfranchised 7 & 8 Vict. c. 53.)

SUFFOLK.
(Eastern Division.)
Rt. hon. John Henniker Lord Henniker,
Rt. hon. Frederick Thellusson Lord Rendlesham.

(Western Division.)
Philip Bennett,
Harry Spencer Waddington.

SUNDERLAND.
David Barclay,
George Hudson.

SURREY.
(*Eastern Division.*)
Henry Kemble,
Edmund Antrobus.
(*Western Division.*)
William Joseph Denison,
John Trotter.

SUSSEX.
(*Eastern Division.*)
Augustus Elliott Fuller.
(*Western Division.*)
Hon. Charles Henry (Gordon Lennox) Earl of March,
Charles Wyndham.

SWANSEA.
John Henry Vivian.

TAMWORTH.
Rt. hon. Sir Robert Peel, bt.,
Edward Henry A'Court.

TAUNTON.
Rt. hon. Henry Labouchere,
Sir Thomas Edward Colebrooke, bt.

TAVISTOCK.
John Salusbury Trelawny,
Hon. (Edward Russell) Lord E. Russell.

TEWKESBURY.
William Dowdeswell,
John Martin.

THETFORD.
Rt. hon. William Bingham Baring,
Sir James Flower, bt.

THIRSK.
John Bell.

TIVERTON.
John Heathcoat,
Rt. hon. Henry John Viscount Palmerston.

TOTNESS.
Hon. Edward Adolphus (Seymour) Lord Seymour,
Charles Barry Baldwin.

TOWER HAMLETS.
Sir William Clay, bt.,
Charles Richard Fox.

TRURO.
John Ennis Vivian,
Edmund Turner.

TYNEMOUTH.
Henry Mitcalfe.

WAKEFIELD.
Hon. William Sebright Lascelles.

WALLINGFORD.
William Seymour Blackstone.

WALSALL.
Robert Scott.

WAREHAM.
John Samuel Wanley Sawbridge Erle Drax.

WARRINGTON.
John Ireland Blackburn.

WARWICK.
Sir Chas. Eurwicke Douglas, knt.,
William Collins.

WARWICKSHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
William Stratford Dugdale,
Charles Newdegate Newdegate.
(*Southern Division.*)
Hon. George Guy (Greville) Lord Brooke,
Evelyn John Shirley.

WELLS.
William Goodenough Hayter,
Richard Blakemore.

WENLOCK.
Hon. George Cecil Weld Forester,
James Milnes Gaskell.

WESTBURY.
Sir Ralph Lopes, bt.

WESTMINSTER.
John Temple Leader,
Hon. Henry John Rous.

WESTMORELAND.
William Thompson,
Hon. Henry Cecil Lowther.

WEYMOUTH AND MELCOMBE REGIS.
Ralph Bernal,
William Dougal Christie.

WHITBY.
Aaron Chapman.

WHITEHAVEN.
Matthias Attwood.

WIGAN.
Hon. James Lindsey,
Charles Standish.

WIGHT (ISLE OF).
Hon. William Henry Ashe A'Court Holmes.

WILTON.
Hon. James Charles Herbert Welbore Ellis (Agar) Viscount Somerton.

WILTSHIRE.
(*Northern Division.*)
Thomas Henry Sutton Sotheron,
Walter Long.
(*Southern Division.*)
John Benett,
Rt. hon. Sidney Herbert.

WINCHESTER.
James Buller East,
Bickham Escott.

WINDSOR.
George Alexander Reid,
Ralph Neville.

WOODSTOCK.
Hon. (Alfred Spencer Churchill) Lord A. Churchill.

WOLVERHAMPTON.
Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers,
Thomas Thornely.

WORCESTER.
Sir Thomas Wilde, knt.,
Joseph Bailey.

WORCESTERSHIRE.
(*Eastern Division.*)
John Barneby,
James Arthur Taylor.
(*Western Division.*)
Hon. Henry Beauchamp Lygon,
Frederick Winn Knight.

WYCOMBE (CHIPPING).
George Henry Dashwood,
Ralph Osborne.

YARMOUTH (GREAT).
Charles Edward Rumbold,
William Wilshere.

YORK.
John Henry Lowther,
Henry Galgacus Redhead Yorke.

YORKSHIRE.
(*East Riding.*)
Henry Broadley,
Right hon. Beaumont Lord Hotham.
(*West Riding.*)
Edmund Beckett Denison.
(*North Riding.*)
Hon. Octavius Duncombe,
Edward Stillingfleet Cayley.

SCOTLAND.

ABERDEEN.
Alexander Bannerman.

ABERDEENSHIRE.
Hon. William Gordon.

ARGYLESHIRE.
Duncan McNeil.

AYR, &c.
Hon.(Patrick James Herbert Crichton Stuart) Lord P. J. H. C. Stuart.

AYRSHIRE.
Alexander Oswald.

BANFFSHIRE.
James Duff.

BERWICKSHIRE.
Sir Hugh Purvis Hume Campbell, bt.

BUTESHIRE.

CAITHNESS-SHIRE.
George Trail.

CLACKMANNAN AND KINROS SHIRES.
William Morrison.

DUMBARTONSHIRE.
Alexander Smollet.

DUMFRIES, &c.
William Ewart.

DUMFRIES-SHIRE.
John James Hope Johnstone.

DUNDEE.
George Duncan.

DYSART, &c.
Robert Ferguson.

EDINBURGH.
Rt. hon. Thomas Babington Macaulay,
William Gibson Craig.

EDINBURGHSHIRE.
Sir John Hope, bt.

ELGIN, &c.
Sir Andrew Leith Hay, knt.

ELGINSHIRE AND NAIRNE.
Charles Lennox Cumming Bruce.

FIFESHIRE.
James Erskine Wemyss.

FORFARSHIRE.
Hon. (John Frederick Gordon) Lord J. F. Gordon.

GLASGOW.
James Oswald,
John Dennistoun.

GREENOCK.
Walter Baine.

HADDINGTON, &c.
James Maitland Balfour.

HADDINGTONSHIRE.
Sir Thomas Buchan Hepburn, bt.

INVERKEITHING, &c.
Hon. Archibald (Primrose) Lord Dalmeny.

INVERNESS, &c.
James Morrison.

INVERNESS-SHIRE.
Henry James Baillie.

KILMARNOCK, &c.
Hon. Edward Pleydell Bouverie.

KINCARDINESHIRE.
Hon. Hugh Arbuthnott.

KIRKCUDBRIGHT.
Thomas Maitland.

KIRKWALL, &c.
James Loch.

LANARKSHIRE.
William Lockhart.

LEITH, &c.
Rt. hon. Andrew Rutherfurd.

LINLITHGOW.
William Baird.

LINLITHGOWSHIRE.
William Baillie.

MONTROSE, INVERBERVIE, &c.
Joseph Hume.

ORKNEY AND SHETLAND SHIRES.
Frederick Dundas.

PAISLEY.
Archibald Hastie.

PEEBLES-SHIRE.
William Forbes Mackenzie.

PERTH.
Rt. hon. Fox Maule.

PERTHSHIRE.
Henry Home Drummond.

RENFREWSHIRE.
Patrick Maxwell Stewart.

ROSS AND CROMARTYSHIRES.
Thomas Mackenzie.

ROXBURGHSHIRE.
Hon. Francis Scott.

ST. ANDREWS, CUPAR, &c.
Edward Ellice.

SELKIRKSHIRE.

STIRLINGSHIRE.
William Forbes.

SUTHERLANDSHIRE.
David Dundas.

WIGTON, &c.
Sir John M'Taggart, bt.

WIGTONSHIRE.
John Dalrymple.

IRELAND.

ANTRIM.
Sir Horace Beauchamp Seymour, knt.,
Nathaniel Alexander.

ARMAGH.
Hon. Archibald (Acheson) Viscount Acheson,
William Verner.

ARMAGH (CITY).
John Dawson Rawdon.

ATHLONE.
John Collett.

BANDON BRIDGE.
Hon. Francis (Bernard) Viscount Bernard.

BELFAST.
Hon. (John Ludford Chichester) Lord J. L. Chichester,
David Robert Ross.

CARLOW.
Henry Bruen,
Thomas Bunbury.

CARLOW (BOROUGH).
Brownlow Villiers Layard.

CARRICKFERGUS.
Peter Kirk.

CASHELL.

CAVAN.
John Young,
Hon. James Pierce Maxwell.

CLARE.
William Nugent M'Namara,
Cornelius O'Brien.

CLONMEL.
Rt. hon. David Richard Pigot.

COLERAINE.
John Boyd.

CORK.
Daniel O'Connell,
Edmund Burke Roche.

CORK (CITY).

Daniel Callaghan.

DONEGAL.
Sir Edmund Samuel Hayes, bt.,
Edward Michael Conolly.

DOWN.
Rt. hon. Frederick William Robert (Stewart) Viscount Castlereagh,
Hon. Edwin (Hill) Lord E. Hill.

DOWNPATRICK.
David Stewart Kerr.

DROGHEDA.
Sir William Meredyth Somerville, bt.

DUBLIN.
James Hans Hamilton,
Thomas Edward Taylor.

DUBLIN (CITY).
Edward Grogan,
William Henry Gregory.

DUBLIN (UNIVERSITY).
Rt. hon. Frederick Shaw,
George Alex. Hamilton.

DUNDALK.
Thos. Nicholas Redington.

DUNGANNON.
Hon. Thomas (Knox) Viscount Northland.

DUNGARVON.
Rt. hon. Richard Lalor Sheil.

ENNIS.
Hewitt Bridgeman.

ENNISKILLEN.
Hon. Henry Arthur Cole.

FERMANAGH.
Sir Arthur Brinsley Brooke, bt.,
Mervyn Archdall.

GALWAY.
John James Bodkin,
Thomas Barnewell Martin.

GALWAY (BOROUGH).
Martin Joseph Blake, bt.,
Sir Valentine Blake, bt.

KERRY.
Hon. William Browne,
Morgan John O'Connell,

KILDARE.
Richard More O'Ferrall,
Robert Archbold.

KILKENNY.
Hon. Pierse Somerset Butler,

KILKENNY (BOROUGH).
John O'Connell.

KING'S (COUNTY).
Hon. John Craven Westenra,
Sir Andrew Armstrong, bt.

KINSALE.
William Henry Watson.

LEITRIM.
Hon. William Sydney (Clements) Viscount Clements,
Samuel White.

LIMERICK.
William Smith O'Brien,
Caleb Powell.

LIMERICK (CITY).
James Kelly,
John O'Brien.

LISBURN.
Henry Meynell.

LONDONDERRY.
Thomas Bateson,
Theobald Jones.

LONDONDERRY (CITY).
Sir Robert Alexander Ferguson, bt.

LONGFORD.
Anthony Lefroy,
Henry White.

LOUTH.
Rich. Montesquieu Bellew,
Hon. Thomas Vesey Dawson.

MALLOW.
Sir Chas. Denham Orlando Jephson Norreys, bt.

MAYO.
Robert Dillon Browne,
Mark Blake.

MEATH.
Matthew Elias Corbally,
Henry Grattan.

MONAGHAN.
Evelyn Philip Shirley,
Charles Powell Leslie.

NEWRY.
Hon. Francis Jack (Needham) Viscount Newry and Morne.

PORTARLINGTON.
Rt. hon. George Lionel Dawson Damer.

QUEEN'S COUNTY.
Sir Chas. Henry Coote, bt.,
Hon. Thos. Vesey.

ROSS (NEW).
Hon. Robert Gore.

ROSSCOMMON.
Fitzstephen French,
Denis O'Conor, (The O'Conor Don).

SLIGO.
John Ffolliott,
William Richard Ormsby Gore.

SLIGO (BOROUGH).
John Patrick Somers.

TIPPERARY.
Richard Albert Fitzgerald,
Nicholas Maher.

TRALEE.
Maurice O'Connell.

TYRONE.
Right hon. Henry Thomas Lowry Corry,
Hon. (Claud Hamilton) Lord C. Hamilton.

WATERFORD.
William Villiers Stuart,
Hon. Robt. Shapland Carew.

WATERFORD (CITY).
Sir Henry Winston Barron, bt.,
Thomas Wyse.

WESTMEATH.
Hugh Morgan Tuite,
Benjamin James Chapman,

WEXFORD.
Villiers Francis Hatton,
James Power.

WEXFORD (BOROUGH).
Sir Thomas Esmonde, bt.

WICKLOW.
William Acton,
Sir Ralph Howard, bt.

YOUGHALL.
Hon. Charles Compton Cavendish.

HANSARD'S

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES,

IN THE *FIFTH SESSION* OF THE *FOURTEENTH PARLIAMENT* OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF *GREAT BRITAIN* AND *IRELAND*, APPOINTED TO MEET 11 NOVEMBER, 1841, AND FROM THENCE CONTINUED TILL 22 JANUARY, 1846, IN THE NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF

HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA.

FIRST VOLUME OF THE SESSION.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, January 22, 1846.

MINUTES.] *Took the Oaths.*—Several Lords.

Sat first.—Earl Verulam, after the Death of his Father; Earl Spencer, after the Death of his Brother; Earl Grey, after the Death of his Father; Earl of Pomfret, after the Death of his Father.

BILLS. *Public.*—1ª. Select Vestries.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Inhabitants of Addington, and numerous other places, in favour of the present Corn Laws; and from Inhabitants of Market Lavington, for the Repeal of the Corn Laws.

MEETING OF PARLIAMENT.

THE PARLIAMENT, which had been prorogued successively from the 9th August to the 2nd October, the 27th November, the 16th December, and the 22nd January, met this day for despatch of Business. The Session was opened by the QUEEN in Person. Being seated on the Throne, and the Commons being at the Bar, with their Speaker, HER MAJESTY was pleased to make the following most Gracious Speech:—

"*My Lords, and Gentlemen,*

"It gives Me great Satisfaction again to meet you in Parliament, and to have the Opportunity of recurring to your Assistance and Advice.

"I continue to receive from My Allies, and from other Foreign Powers, the strongest Assurances of their Desire to cultivate the most friendly Relations with this Country.

"I rejoice that, in concert with the Emperor of *Russia*, and through the Success of Our joint Mediation, I have been enabled to adjust the Differences which had long prevailed between the *Ottoman Porte* and the King of *Persia*, and had seriously endangered the Tranquillity of the East.

"For several Years a desolating and sanguinary Warfare has afflicted the States of the *Rio de la Plata*. The Commerce of all Nations has been interrupted, and Acts of Barbarity

have been committed unknown to the Practice of a civilized People. In conjunction with the King of the *French*, I am endeavouring to effect the Pacification of these States.

"The Convention concluded with *France* in the course of the last Year, for the more effectual Suppression of the Slave Trade, is about to be carried into immediate Execution by the active Co-operation of the Two Powers on the Coast of *Africa*.

"It is My Desire that Our present Union, and the good Understanding which so happily exists between Us, may always be employed to promote the Interests of Humanity, and to secure the Peace of the World.

"I regret that the conflicting Claims of *Great Britain* and the United States, in respect of the Territory on the North-western Coast of *America*, although they have been made the Subject of repeated Negotiation, still remain unsettled. You may be assured that no Effort consistent with National Honour shall be wanting on My Part to bring this Question to an early and peaceful Termination.

"*Gentlemen of the House of Commons*,

"The Estimates for the Year will be laid before you at an early Period.

"Although I am deeply sensible of the Importance of enforcing Economy in all Branches of the Expenditure, yet I have been compelled, by a due Regard to the Exigencies of the Public Service, and to the State of our Naval and Military Establishments, to propose some Increase in the Estimates which provide for their Efficiency.

"*My Lords, and Gentlemen*,

"I have observed with deep Regret the very frequent Instances in which the Crime of deliberate Assassination has been of late committed in *Ireland*.

"It will be your Duty to consider whether any Measures can be devised calculated to give increased Protection to Life, and to bring to Justice the Perpetrators of so dreadful a Crime.

"I have to lament that in consequence of the Failure of the Potato Crop in several Parts of the United Kingdom there will be a deficient Supply of an Article of Food which forms the chief Subsistence of great Numbers of My People.

"The Disease by which the Plant has been affected has prevailed to the greatest Extent in *Ireland*.

"I have adopted all such Precautions as it was in My Power to adopt for the Purpose of alleviating the Sufferings which may be caused by this Calamity; and I shall confidently rely on your Co-operation in devising such other Means for effecting the same benevolent Purpose as may require the Sanction of the Legislature.

"I have had great Satisfaction in giving My Assent to the Measures which you have presented to Me from Time to Time, calculated to extend Commerce, and to stimulate domestic Skill and Industry, by the Repeal of prohibitory and the Relaxation of protective Duties.

"The prosperous State of the Revenue, the increased Demand for Labour, and the general Improvement which has taken place in the internal Condition of the Country, are strong

Testimonies in favour of the Course you have pursued.

"I recommend you to take into your early Consideration, whether the Principles on which you have acted may not with Advantage be yet more extensively applied; and whether it may not be in your Power, after a careful Review of the existing Duties upon many Articles, the Produce or Manufacture of other Countries, to make such further Reductions and Remissions as may tend to ensure the Continuance of the great Benefits to which I have adverted, and by enlarging our Commercial Intercourse, to strengthen the Bonds of Amity with Foreign Powers.

"Any Measures which you may adopt for effecting these great Objects will, I am convinced, be accompanied by such Precautions as shall prevent permanent Loss to the Revenue, or injurious Results to any of the great Interests of the Country.

"I have full Reliance on your just and dispassionate Consideration of Matters so deeply affecting the Public Welfare.

"It is My earnest Prayer that, with the Blessing of Divine Providence on your Counsels, you may be enabled to promote friendly Feelings between different Classes of My Subjects, to provide additional Security for the Continuance of Peace, and to maintain Contentment and Happiness at home, by increasing the Comforts and bettering the Condition of the great body of My People.

HER MAJESTY then retired, and the House adjourned during Pleasure: having resumed,

ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO THE SPEECH.

The EARL of HOME: My Lords, in rising to propose that an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, in answer to Her Majesty's most Gracious Speech from the Throne, which your Lordships have just heard read, I feel gratified by the reflection that I shall have no proposition to submit to your Lordships, upon which I anticipate difference of opinion in debate, or any division in the Vote which I must call upon your Lordships to give. It is also a matter of high satisfaction to me when I consider that the subjects alluded to in the Speech and in the Address I am about to submit, are not surrounded by such difficulties as need call for that, which, were it required, I should feel quite unable to bring to bear upon them—namely, a power of illustration and explanation. I am, however, too sensible of my own deficiency to occupy more of your Lordships' time by dwelling upon it, and I therefore proceed at once, with these few prefatory remarks, to the immediate duty with which I have been entrusted. In the first place, I have to congratulate your Lordships on the assurances which Her Majesty informed you She continued to receive from Her Allies, and from all other Foreign Powers, of their desire to cultivate the most friendly relations with this country. I am aware that owing to the constant recurrence, for a series of years, of the same assurances being received from Foreign Powers of their peaceable desires and intentions, your Lordships can scarcely avoid looking upon this part of the Royal Speech as a mere matter of course; and, in offering my congratulations to your Lordships at receiving this gratifying intelligence from Her Majesty, I therefore labour under the disadvantage of appearing to repeat what, year by year, has been said to your Lordships by those who, on similar occasions, have appeared in the situation in which I have now the honour to stand before your Lordships. But, in truth, the very fact of the repetition of this congratulation enhances its value; and every year's prolongation of peace in the world, ought to make us the more sensible of the advantages and the blessings which this long continuance of peace brings to this country, and ought to induce us more highly to appreciate the skill and judgment of those by whose wise counsels this state of things has been prolonged. Her Majesty proceeded to inform your Lordships, that in conjunction with the Emperor of Russia, and through the success of their joint mediation, She has been enabled to adjust the differences which have long existed between the Ottoman Porte and the Schah

of Persia, and which have seriously endangered the tranquillity of the East. The mere fact of the settlement of a dispute which had existed between the Porte and the Schah of Persia, might not at first sight appear to be of any immediate importance to this great country, or to have any direct bearing on the peace of Europe and of the world; but when your Lordships take into consideration the vast interests which Great Britain possesses in the East, and the consequences that might have ensued to the tranquillity of the extended frontiers of our empire in India had these differences been permitted to ripen into war, I am convinced that you will see the importance of the intelligence which Her Majesty has graciously communicated, and that you will concur with me in the satisfaction which I feel at the evidence to be derived from this transaction, of the desire of the Emperor of Russia to unite with Her Majesty in promoting the line of policy adopted by Her Majesty's Government to preserve peace in the East, more especially when the result has been to prevent a rupture between two Mahommedan powers, which probably would have led to horrors all the more dreadful, inasmuch as they would have been unrestrained by the softening influences of Christianity. From this subject I have now to draw your Lordships' attention to another quarter of the globe, in which Her Majesty is similarly employed, and for a similar object, and in which also Her Majesty has had the happiness to obtain the co-operation of a powerful ally. I allude to the warfare that has been so long existing in the States bordering on the Rio de la Plata. These States, formerly dependencies of the Spanish Crown, have since been recognised as independent Governments; and your Lordships must be well aware of the importance of preserving to each State its particular independence. Differences had, however, arisen between these States; and these differences had led to a war, which, as Her Majesty has informed you, has been for several years past of a desolating and sanguinary character, and has been characterized by barbarities, on both sides, among the conflicting parties unknown to the practice of civilized people. The result has been, great interruption to trade and commerce; and consequent inconvenience, not only to the subjects of this country, but also to the merchants of all parts of the world. It became, therefore, for every reason, most desirable that an end should be put to such a state of things. Accordingly, France and England determined conjointly to undertake that work of pacification; and there is every reason to hope, that as the Governments of both countries are perfectly disinterested, and have no object of their own to serve, and no desire to interfere with the internal concerns of other countries, but only to restore independence where it had been invaded by the stronger State, and to re-establish peace, their efforts will soon be crowned with success, and that at no distant day freedom of commerce will be established on a secure and lasting basis. Your Lordships are already aware, that in the course of last year a Convention was concluded between this country and France, for the more effectual suppression of the Slave Trade; and your Lordships will derive satisfaction from knowing, that that Convention is about being carried into immediate execution by the active co-operation of both Powers. Feeling in common with every other Englishman the greatest detestation of this dreadful trade, it might perhaps be a comparatively easy task for me to dilate on some of the horrors attendant upon it; but as I know that your Lordships do not require to have your feelings aroused on this point, and as I know that every information that could be acquired has been already afforded to your Lordships, I will refrain from entering upon the subject. Neither do I think it necessary to enter upon any historical details of the efforts that have been made by this country for the extirpation of the Slave Trade; efforts made through good report and through evil report, and in spite of the insinuations which were thrown out against our sincerity. It was thought that we could not have devoted so much treasure, and incurred so much risk and so much trouble, for the mere purpose of putting down the Slave Trade, and for an object which was considered too romantic to be real; and that our efforts were chiefly directed to the assertion of our own maritime rights and supremacy. I rejoice to think that this feeling no longer exists, and that an ardent desire to effect the abolition of the Slave Trade is no longer confined to this country, but that other nations of Europe are joining their efforts to ours, and are awakened to a full sense of the disgrace which this nefarious traffic brings upon the civilized world. It must be, therefore, most satisfactory to your Lordships to know that France is now for the first time, actively

co-operating with this country in this measure. And here your Lordships may well join in the wish expressed by Her Majesty, that the union and cordial understanding which so happily exist between Her Majesty and Her powerful Ally may long endure, and that the power of both nations may be exerted, not in rivalry against each other, but for the benefit of mankind, and for the advancement of the interests of humanity. I believe that it has been said that England has purchased this co-operation of France rather dearly, by the sacrifice of the Right of Search, which has long been considered essential to carrying out effectual efforts for the suppression of the Slave Trade; but when we know that the French Government are, on the other hand, assailed on the same point, and charged with having established a new right of search more prejudicial than the old one, the natural conclusion to be drawn is, that both accusations are alike unfounded—that the sacrifice has been injurious to neither. For my own part, I am fully convinced that an effectual method has been discovered for putting an end to this traffic, which has the merit of respecting national prejudices, while it does not sacrifice the honour of either party. It must be satisfactory to your Lordships, as well as a subject of congratulation from me, that the negotiation was entrusted to the hands of the Duke de Broglie and Dr. Lushington—who are the two men least likely, perhaps, of any others in Europe, to agree to any thing which could be injurious to the cause of abolition of the Slave Trade, to which so much of their lives had been devoted. It may, perhaps, be too sanguine an expectation for me to indulge in, to anticipate that there can be any immediate diminution in Slavery itself, in consequence of the joint efforts of the two countries; but we may at least hope that by the vigilance of the united cruisers of France and Great Britain, an effectual check may soon be put to the dreadful transport of human beings across the Atlantic from the coast of Africa, for the purpose of filling up the gaps which cruelty and neglect may have made in the ranks of the unfortunate negroes, in those States where the disgrace of slavery is still permitted to exist. I next proceed to that part of Her Majesty's Speech which relates to the conflicting claims of this country and the United States in respect of the territory on the north-western coast of America. Your Lordships will, I am sure, cordially join in the regret expressed by Her Majesty that this question still remains unsettled, and will cordially approve of any efforts which Her Majesty may be advised to take, consistent with the national honour, to bring it to an early and peaceful termination. It must be evident to all true friends of their country, both on this side of the Atlantic and on the other, that it is obviously for the interest of both countries that the most friendly relations and good understanding should exist between them. Disastrous as the consequences are when hostilities take place between nations, they are peculiarly to be deprecated when they occur between two countries bound together by so many ties—the ties of common origin, common language, and of common interests—as England and the United States of America undoubtedly are. This must be so evident to all, that the negotiations which may take place on this question must be accompanied by the ardent wishes for success of all reasonable and right-thinking men in both countries. The progress of these negotiations has indeed hitherto been slow, and attended with no successful results; but the difficulties, though hard to be avoided, can scarcely be such as may not be overcome when the negotiations are entrusted to the hands of those who are zealous in the cause of peace and reconciliation. I look, indeed, to the success of past negotiations as a happy augury for that which is to come. I allude more particularly to the termination of that dispute which, a short time back, existed respecting the north-eastern boundary which separates the territory of the United States from those of Great Britain—a dispute which bore at one time the most threatening aspect, and which created great excitement and even animosity against this country among some of the citizens of the United States; yet we find that even this dispute was amicably terminated by the intervention of a noble Lord, a distinguished Member of your Lordships' House. As to the mode in which this amicable arrangement was effected, it is sufficient for me to say that it met with the decided approbation of both Houses of Parliament, which approbation has been since fully confirmed by the general voice of the country. I consider also the fact that the same noble Earl, under whose firm and skilful, but at the same time temperate instructions, that noble Lord to whom I have alluded, carried on his negotiations, still presides over the Foreign Affairs of this country; and I may, perhaps, be per-

mitted to express my confidence, that in the hands of that noble Earl the country will suffer no loss of honour; while at the same time every effort that diplomacy can make will be tried to bring the matter in dispute to an amicable conclusion. I next come to that part of Her Majesty's Speech in which She announces that She has been compelled by a due regard to the exigencies of the public service, and to the state of the naval and military establishments, to propose some increase in the Estimates which provide for their efficiency. When your Lordships take into consideration our widely-extended Empire, and our colonial possessions scattered over the face of the globe, I think you will find sufficient reason for this recommendation in Her Majesty's Speech, without looking for one in the anticipation of any possible interruption to the peace of the world at present so happily existing. Your Lordships need not be told of the great amount of forces that are required, even in periods of the most profound peace, for the maintenance of order in all the territories of Great Britain, both at home and abroad, and for the protection of our commerce in those parts of the world not under Her Majesty's dominion. British enterprise is daily extending the sphere of its operation, and making corresponding demands for protection. Without, therefore, entering into any details of the severity of the duty required from our gallant soldiers and sailors, and which, I firmly believe, nothing but the proverbial loyalty and patient endurance of hardship in the British character would enable them to go through as they have done; I think that I have shown grounds sufficient to justify me in asking for your Lordships' concurrence in that part of the Address. I next come to a subject in which I feel confident that the House will join with me in the regret which I must express that Her Majesty should be obliged, by the dreadful nature of the case, to bring under your Lordships' notice: I allude to the deep regret expressed by Her Majesty at the very frequent instances in which the crime of deliberate assassination has been of late committed in Ireland, and Her Majesty's recommendation of measures to bring to justice the perpetrators of such dreadful crimes. Your Lordships must have observed in the public journals, and through other sources of information, to what an extent this dreadful crime has been carried in some parts of that country; and I feel confident that your Lordships will completely sympathise with the Sovereign in Her feelings on the subject, and that I may confidently anticipate that you will take Her Majesty's wishes into consideration, and direct your attention to the consideration of such measures as may seem best calculated to give increased protection to life, and to bring happiness and security to our Irish fellow subjects; and which may have the effect of providing a remedy for this crying evil. Her Majesty in the next place brings to your Lordships' notice the disease that has unfortunately affected the potato crop in several parts of the United Kingdom; and on that subject I feel sure that your Lordships will have shared in the general anxiety and apprehension which has been felt on account of the great failure that has taken place in what I may call one of the necessaries of life. Failures in the potato crop have been known before; but never, I believe, one so fatal nor so extensive in its operation as the present. It has not only visited this country, but other countries also; and is not only more destructive than any former visitation of this kind, but also different in its nature. No part of this country has been exempt; but in England and Scotland the evil has not reached to such an extent as was at one time feared it would have done; but there is no doubt that great distress will be felt even here. Had England and Scotland, however, alone been concerned, I think I may venture to say that the evil has not extended farther than, with the industrious habits of the people, would have been remedied by their own exertions. In Ireland, however, the case is different. The ravages of the disease are said to be much greater in that country than here; and I believe that I do not err from the truth in saying, that from the accounts which are continually received from that country, the extent to which the evil has gone, and the dreadful consequences which must result from it, are yet not fully known. Your Lordships will therefore see that in that country disastrous consequences may justly be apprehended; and we should feel deeply grateful to Her Majesty for having, with Her usual care for the welfare of Her people, adopted all such precautions as it has been in Her power to adopt, for the purpose of alleviating the sufferings that may be caused by that calamity, and for having gone to the full extent of the powers of the Crown, without the sanction of Parliament, in order to do so; and I feel confident that your Lordships will cheerfully do whatever may be necessary

to carry out the good work which Her Majesty has begun, and will tender your advice to Her Majesty in recommending such measures as may have the effect of averting the threatened calamity, and of providing against future seasons of scarcity. I now come to another part of the Speech, in which Her Majesty brings before the notice of Parliament the prosperous state of the revenue, the increased demand for labour, and the general improvement which has taken place in the internal condition of the country. These instances in proof of the success of past measures with respect to commerce have induced Her Majesty to recommend to Parliament to take into its early consideration whether the same principles may not be more extensively carried out with benefit to the people of this country, and to the strengthening the bonds of amity with Foreign Powers. This part of the subject I approach with great diffidence. Having so lately had the honour of a seat in this House, and having therefore so little acquaintance with the business of Parliament, I feel that it would be presumptuous in me to express an opinion on so important a matter: were I to do so, I should probably fail in throwing any new light upon the subject, and, although far from intending it, I might introduce topics which might rouse party feeling, and tend to bring on premature discussion with respect to measures the consideration of which I am sure that the great majority of the House will agree with me in thinking it will be better to reserve to a more fitting and not distant opportunity, when Her Majesty's Ministers may be enabled to make known what their views are, and what the measures which they intend to introduce into Parliament. I will content myself, therefore, with saying that I feel confident that the House will agree in congratulating the Sovereign and the country on the prosperous state of the revenue, on the increased demand for labour, and on the general improvement which has taken place in the internal condition of the country, and on the prosperous state of all branches of industry; and I am also sure that every noble Lord in this House will heartily rejoice that the commercial measures of the Government—whatever may have been his fears when they were introduced—have not had the effect of diminishing, but, on the contrary, of greatly extending the resources of the country, of which, no doubt, ample evidence will be laid on your Table without delay. I am also confident that this House will come to the consideration of the further measures calculated to carry out the principles which have been hitherto so successfully applied, to which Her Majesty directs our attention, with the sincere and disinterested desire of doing all that is necessary for the promotion of the general interests of the Empire, and in the most liberal and enlightened spirit. Having now, to the best of my humble abilities, touched upon the most important topics of Her Majesty's Speech, I have only to express my hope, that my total inexperience in addressing so illustrious an Assembly as this is, may not have betrayed me into any expression calculated to divert discussion from the legitimate object of this night's debate, or to disturb the unanimity with which I trust your Lordships will vote for the Address I have the honour to propose. Thanking your Lordships for the considerate forbearance with which you have treated me during the time I have trespassed on your attention, I will now, with your permission, read the words of the Address.

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to return Your Majesty our humble Thanks for Your Majesty's most gracious Speech from the Throne.

We beg leave to express our Satisfaction that Your Majesty continues to receive from Your Allies, and from other Powers, the strongest Assurances of their Desire to cultivate the most friendly Relations with this Country; and that Your Majesty, in concert with the Emperor of Russia, and through the Success of joint Mediation, has been enabled to adjust the Differences which had long prevailed between the Ottoman Porte and the King of Persia, and had seriously endangered the Tranquillity of the East.

We thank Your Majesty for informing us that inasmuch as for several Years a desolating and sanguinary Warfare has afflicted the States of Rio de la Plata, by which the Commerce of all Nations has been interrupted, and Acts of Barbarity have been committed unknown to the Practice of a civilized People, Your Majesty is endeavouring, in conjunction with the King of the French, to effect a Pacification of these States.

We thank Your Majesty for informing us that the Convention concluded with France in the course of the last Year, for the more effectual

Suppression of the Slave Trade, is about to be carried into execution by the active Co-operation of the Two Powers on the Coast of Africa; and that it is Your Majesty's Desire that the present Union, and the good Understanding which so happily exists between the Two Countries, may always be employed to promote the Interests of Humanity, and to secure the Peace of the World.

In accordance with Your Majesty we regret that the conflicting Claims of Great Britain and the United States, in respect of the Territory on the North-western Coast of America, although they have been made the Subject of repeated Negotiation, still remain unsettled.

We rejoice to learn that Your Majesty will continue to make all such Efforts as may be consistent with National Honour to bring this Question to an early and peaceful Termination.

We humbly assure Your Majesty that with Your Majesty we have deeply regretted to observe the very frequent Instances in which the Crime of deliberate Assassination has been of late committed in Ireland, and we will not fail to consider whether any Measures can be devised calculated to give increased Protection to Life, and bring to Justice the Perpetrators of so dreadful a Crime.

In common with Your Majesty we lament that in consequence of the Failure of the Potato Crop in several Parts of the United Kingdom there will be a deficient Supply of an Article of Food which forms the chief Subsistence of great Numbers of Your Majesty's People; and that the Disease by which the Plant has been affected has prevailed to the greatest Extent in Ireland.

We rejoice to learn that Your Majesty has adopted all such Precautions as it was in Your Majesty's Power to adopt for the Purpose of alleviating the Sufferings which may be caused by this Calamity; and Your Majesty may confidently rely on our Co-operation in devising such other Means for effecting the same benevolent Purpose as may require the Sanction of the Legislature.

We humbly beg to thank Your Majesty for informing us that Your Majesty has had great Satisfaction in giving Your Assent to the Measures which we have presented to Your Majesty from Time to Time, calculated to extend Commerce and to stimulate domestic Skill and Industry, by the Repeal of prohibitory and the Relaxation of protective Duties; and that Your Majesty considers that the prosperous State of the Revenue, the increased Demand for Labour, and the general Improvement which has taken place in the internal Condition of the Country, are strong Testimonies in favour of the Course we have pursued.

In conformity with Your Majesty's Recommendation we will take into our early Consideration whether the Principles on which we have acted may not with Advantage be yet more extensively applied; and whether it may not be in our Power, after a careful Review of the existing Duties upon many Articles, the Produce or Manufacture of other Countries, to make such further Reductions and Remissions as may tend to ensure the Continuance of the great Benefits to which Your Majesty has referred, and by enlarging our Commercial Intercourse to strengthen the Bonds of Amity with Foreign Powers.

Your Majesty may rely upon our Endeavours that any Measures which we may adopt for effecting these great Objects may be accompanied by such Precautions as shall prevent permanent Loss to the Revenue, or injurious Results to any of the great Interests of the Country.

We humbly beg to thank Your Majesty for the Expression of Your Majesty's full Reliance on our just and dispassionate Consideration of Matters so deeply affecting the Public Welfare.

We join most fervently in the earnest Prayer of Your Majesty that, with the Blessing of Divine Providence on our Counsels, we may be enabled to promote friendly Feelings between different Classes of Your Majesty's Subjects, to provide additional Security for the Continuance of Peace, and to maintain Contentment and Happiness at Home, by increasing the Comforts and bettering the Condition of the great Body of Your Majesty's People.

LORD DE ROS, on rising to second the Motion, said: By the very judicious manner in which the noble Lord who preceded me referred to the various topics of the Queen's Speech, it has been rendered needless for me to detain your Lordships at any great length. I shall venture, however, to pay a just tribute to the good faith and honour of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia as to the steps which he has adopted, in conjunction with Her Majesty's Government, to mediate, with a view to the adjustment of the differences which have so long existed between the Ottoman Porte and the King of Persia, and on the success which has attended such mediation. I rejoice at the success of the policy of this country, which is not only to promote and cultivate the arts of peace herself, but also to exert herself on all occasions, when differences arise between other countries, to mediate with a view to the maintenance of general harmony. With respect to the Convention with the King of the French for the more effectual suppression of the Slave Trade, I cordially concur with my noble Friend as to its advantages, not only as regards the great principle of

putting down the infernal traffic in slaves, but because I believe that the alliance between France and England for its suppression will be the means, not of exciting rivalry and jealousy, but of promoting a friendly spirit of emulation and co-operation between the maritime forces of the two countries. My Lords, with respect to the Oregon Territory, I also entirely agree with my noble Friend; and I hope and believe, notwithstanding the attempts of a party in the United States to get up a war cry against this country, that the good sense of the American nation, and their consciousness that their interests are identified with those of this country, will on this, as on former occasions, enable Her Majesty's Government to conclude an amicable settlement of the dispute. After what has fallen from my noble Friend as to the proposed increase of the Army and Navy, I will only remind the House that this was necessary in consequence of the great extension and increase of our colonial possessions; and that it is but just to afford relief to the persons employed in the public service, as it is not desirable to put too hard a strain upon the devotion and willing services of our soldiers or seamen. The question of endeavouring to repress by some new measures the fearful system of assassination which now prevails in Ireland, is also referred to in the Speech of Her Majesty. My Lords, I should be the last man to desire to see any coercive measures proposed by the Government, which would restrict the general liberty of the subject throughout Ireland; but, my Lords, I do think that on those bloodstained spots, where intimidation has been allowed completely to prevail over justice, and to paralyse the ordinary efforts of the law, in those parts of the country, every lover of his country, whether a native of England, or of Ireland, would desire to see the necessary measures applied. I should be sorry to overstate the case—and I wish it to be understood that my remarks apply only to the particular districts in which this abominable system has prevailed—for I do not mean to say that such a state of things is general, and I should greatly mis-state the case if I led the House to infer that I supposed that such a state of things exists in the greater part of Ireland; but it does prevail and has long prevailed in certain districts, in which it is carried to a very fearful extent. In these districts so well organized is this system of intimidation, that it is almost impossible to obtain convictions. Nor is this to be wondered at, when the prosecutor, the witness, and even the jurymen, are liable, if they do their duty, and act according to their consciences, to the very same awful fate as the victim of the murderer who stands before them for his trial. It is no longer a question of the midnight assassin in those parts of Ireland. Assasinations are perpetrated in broad day, and the assassins are allowed to escape without any attempt being made to seize them. In some places it has been shown in evidence, that the price of blood is openly determined, and that assassinations can be procured to be perpetrated for 3*l.* or 4*l.* Under these circumstances the Legislature is now urgently called upon to take the subject into its consideration. With respect to the scarcity of the potato crop, there can be no doubt that the disease has prevailed to a great extent in Ireland—that it is likely to be productive of very great difficulty and distress—and therefore it will be desirable that steps should be taken in due time for ensuring a supply of food when the pressure for it arrives. The hospitality of the Irish almost all persons who have visited that country agree in praising; but another and a nobler virtue is to be found amongst them—that of unbounded charity, which has been exercised by them from the highest to the lowest, on all occasions, in the most praiseworthy manner. This will, I hope, tend to alleviate the worst evils of famine in that country, and to give double effect to the measures adopted by the Government. Great room for employment exists in all parts of Ireland, and it affords much facilities of approach by means of water. No part of Ireland is above fifty miles from the coast; and, therefore, those facilities are greater, perhaps, than those presented by any other country for receiving the supplies which can be speedily thrown into it. Her Majesty's Speech then alludes to the repeal or relaxation of protective duties: that is a subject which is so far beyond my experience that I will not enter into any discussion of it; but I will merely observe that the relaxations which have been already made in the Tariff have not been productive of those evils which some expected would have been the result of them. I do not think that the fears and anticipations which were manifested at the time the proposition was made for allowing the importation of foreign cattle into this country, have been at

all borne out, or that that measure has been attended with any serious injury to the farmers; and so I trust it may prove with other measures of a similar nature. My noble Friend who preceded me stated the difficulties which he felt in entering upon that part of Her Majesty's Speech which alludes to this subject; and if such were his sentiments, I feel that my difficulty is even still greater. All that I can venture to do is, to call your Lordships' attention to that sentence of Her Majesty's Speech which contains this recommendation with respect to the introduction of such measures:—

"Any measures which you may adopt for effecting these great objects will, I am convinced, be accompanied by such precautions as shall prevent permanent loss to the revenue, or injurious results to any of the great interests of the country."

In conclusion, I entreat of your Lordships to give such measures as may be proposed, at least the benefit of a calm and dispassionate consideration. My Lords, it only remains for me to second the Address, and to thank your Lordships for the patience with which you have heard me.

The Question was then put from the Woolsack, and no noble Lord rising, was declared by the Lord Chancellor to be carried in the affirmative.

The DUKE of RICHMOND, however, then rose hastily, and said: I am not at all surprised at the effort that has been made to stop the discussion—

The LORD CHANCELLOR: I beg the noble Duke will not state that I wanted to stop the discussion. I put the question deliberately, and was surprised that no noble Lord had risen; but when I found that no noble Lord was inclined to rise, after more than the usual interval, I put the question, and I put it slowly.

The EARL of SHAFTESBURY said, he sat near his noble Friend the noble and learned Lord on the Woolsack, and he could say that his noble and learned Friend put the question distinctly.

The DUKE of RICHMOND: I am perfectly in order in speaking now—in moving, if I think necessary, the adjournment of the House; but I speak, being perfectly in order upon this question. In the first place, I must express the satisfaction with which I listened to the speech of the noble Lord who moved so eloquently the Address upon this occasion. I should not have interrupted the noble Lord with "No, no," if it had not been that some noble Lords on this side of the House cheered that part of his speech in which he expressed his hope that we would wait until we heard what measures the Ministers intend to propose. I have heard enough in this speech to know what the Minister intends to do. I know that he intends to withdraw protection from the domestic industry of this country. I should have liked the Speech better if it had been a little more manly, and had used the words Corn Laws. I defy any noble Lord to say that it is not the intention of the paragraph of Her Majesty's Speech now alluded to, to indicate the abolition of the Corn Laws of this country—a measure which I know is advocated by many noble Lords on the other side; that is, to get rid of the solemn compact that was made with the agricultural interest in the year 1842, when, as was said by Mr. Gladstone, now Secretary of State for the Colonies, in order to remove difficulties, and for the purpose of getting a permanent law, we made great sacrifices for that object. I might call attention to what Mr. Gladstone said in 1843, when he said it would be unjust to the agriculturists, it would be dishonourable to the Government and to Parliament, if they proposed any change without great and adequate cause. I ask where is the cause now? Is it the failure of the potato crop in Ireland? No. The intention of the Government was previously stated in the Government prints and in the League organs—I class them together because I see no difference between the Government and the Anti-Corn-Law League, and, for myself, cannot see why Mr. Cobden should not be created a peer. I wish to ask the people of England—I wish to ask those noble Lords who disagree from me in opinion as to the expediency of free trade—whether they approve of the course of the Anti-Corn-Law League. I say that that course has been most unconstitutional. I say they are the authors of the whole of those changes which the Ministers are about to propose, and which you, my Lords, will not, I hope, sanction; for I hope and trust that this House will never so far abandon their duty to their country as to be intimidated by the Anti-Corn-Law League or their money. What is the fact? The Government comes and asks us to make a sacrifice to popular clamour, while we find in the very Speech which we have heard read, that the concessions of Sir R. Peel in 1829 have been soon forgotten, and that they have not produced tranquillity in Ireland; but that,

on the contrary, assassinations and murders take place every day. This is in the same Speech in which the Government come to us and ask us to give way to alterations in those laws which every man knows are for the benefit, not of the agricultural interest alone, but of every class of persons in this country. And I call the attention of the operatives in the great towns of England to the statements of Sir R. Peel in 1839, when he was seeking office at the hands of the agriculturists. He then said, "If you get rid of the Corn Laws you must expect that the farmers will ask of you to get rid of protection to every other branch of industry." He stated then, as I state now, that if you get rid of protection to corn, you must get rid of protection altogether. Are you prepared to do that? Are you prepared to destroy your Custom House? If you are, where are you to get revenue to pay the public creditor? My Lords, if protection to agriculture is to be got rid of because it is a great monopoly, there are other great monopolies which you must treat in the same way. What do you think of the East India monopoly, and the Bank of England monopoly, and a hundred others? If you consent to make those inroads and to get rid of protection, you will have to pull down the House altogether, and rebuild it from the commencement. Will it be just or right that the farmer should pay the same tithe as he did when the Corn Law was in existence? Can the Civil List remain as it is, can a single payment for salary be made, if you at once destroy all protective duties? My Lords, I, for one, will not give your Lordships the trouble of voting against any Amendment on the present occasion; but I enter my solemn protest against that clause of the Speech from the Throne to which I have referred. I say that that clause of the Speech is contrary to every principle ever brought forward by the present Government. There is no Speech of theirs from the year 1839, when they were seeking for office, up to the present moment, which does not go directly in the face of that clause. I know nothing of what their measure may be, but I have a right to speak strongly, because I am one of those who are for no relaxation in the Corn Laws at all. But we are told forthsooth, that a series of little measures have been brought before Parliament year after year, and that the object of those little measures was what some of your Lordships always said they were—a step towards free trade, and against which little measures I for one always voted. But Sir R. Peel had contrived by his eloquence, and by his smooth speeches, to get so large a majority of both Houses to put their confidence in him, that he was able to pass those measures. My Lords, that confidence may exist still in some quarters, but I say it exists not in the large body of the middle classes of this country. I say that the manly, open, and truly English character of the farmers of this country has been displayed on late occasions: they do not ask you to reject any of those measures. No; but they come to their Sovereign and the Government and say—"You, the present Government, came into office pledged to protection: you have thought fit—we care not why, we do not impute motives—to propose an alteration in the Corn Laws; but we say to you, you ought not to carry out such a measure without again appealing to the country." My Lords, that must be a bad cause indeed in which the Minister does not dare to face, on what is supposed to be a popular question, the electors of the country upon the hustings. We ask you for no more. Give us a clear stage and no favour. Appeal to the country, and let the country decide whether or not we are to have those modern innovations passed into law, whether we are to be rendered dependent on foreigners for the supply of our population; whether we are to be constantly changing about because there happens to be some popular clamour. My Lords, I think the present occasion should not be allowed to pass without our hearing from some Member of the Government the reasons of their resignation of office. I think the House and the country have a right to be informed on the subject. I think we have a right to know the reasons for those sudden changes. Those reasons of these sudden resignations and counter-resignations are known only to some half-dozen of my noble Friends behind me, and to some half-dozen noble Lords on the Treasury Bench opposite. These are grave questions, and I think the country has, at the first moment of the opening of Parliament, a right to inquire why the Government resigned their offices. Explanations have been offered, but I can find no explanation at all; but I know this well, that the protective duties are in immense danger. My Lords, if I am rightly informed, if those who sit behind me sat on the opposite side of the House, the ports would have been imme-

diately opened, though I am satisfied we should not have free trade; for those who unfortunately support Sir R. Peel in power in another place would carry out the pledges made to their constituents if another Government had been formed. My Lords, I feel assured that your Lordships will consider the question on its true merits—that you will do your duty to your Sovereign and to your country; that you will not have any fears, but, banishing from your minds who the Minister is who proposes these measures, that you will look to the measures themselves, and if they tend in any degree to diminish the protection of British industry, that you will give them your most cordial opposition. I do not feel called on to say more, on the present occasion, than I have; but I will say this, that I will use every Parliamentary means of opposition in my power—be it called factious or otherwise I care not—for where the interests of a large body of people are concerned I do not pretend to be over sensitive; and further, I will take every opportunity I can, day after day, to press on your Lordships the necessity, at all events, of not proceeding further. Now, with regard to the great benefits produced by the Tariff, we have heard a great deal of the disease of potatoes; but it has been forgotten that we have had a disease of cattle, and this disease may account for the Tariff not being so prejudicial as some persons thought it would be. But I will not enter upon the discussion of that topic now, as I shall probably have other opportunities of doing so. On the present occasion I merely wish to enter my solemn protest against the clause in the Speech from the Throne to which I have referred, and to say that I think that the House is entitled to hear from some Member of the Government the reasons for their resignation.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON: My Lords, my noble Friend the noble Duke has moved no Amendment to the Address proposed by the noble Earl who spoke on this side of the House. He has complained of the omission of all reference to the Corn Laws in the Speech from the Throne, and also in the Address. It is not necessary for me, on the present occasion, to follow my noble Friend over his observations on the conduct of a Minister in another place, nor shall I now defend that conduct or any measure of his Government. The question now before the House is, the Address which has been moved by my noble Friend near me; and I beg to inform your Lordships, that other measures will be brought before you in the course of a very few days; for I understand that notice has already been given of the intention of bringing forward those measures on Tuesday next, in another place; and in the course of time, those measures must come under the consideration of this House. I, therefore, entreat your Lordships to consider that you have nothing before you except the proposition of my noble Friend near me, and that you will have an opportunity of taking into consideration those measures when they come under your Lordships' notice. My noble Friend the noble Duke will then have an opportunity of endeavouring to persuade your Lordships to dissent from those measures;—but what I now entreat of your Lordships is, to adopt the Address, which says that you will take them into your consideration. With respect to the question put to me by my noble Friend the noble Duke in reference to the resignation of the Ministry, I beg to remind my noble Friend that he has been himself a Member of the Privy Council of the Sovereign; and he knows that, as a Member of that Council, he was sworn to keep the counsels of the Sovereign secret, and that no Member can come down here and talk of what has passed at those Councils, without having had the previous permission of the Sovereign; and, under those circumstances, I must think that, before my noble Friend asked that question, he should have given notice of his intention to do so, in order that those who might think proper to enter into any explanation on the subject might have obtained permission to state that which they thought proper. But asking questions in this way the first night of the Session, is not usual. The public interests require that the counsels of the Sovereign should be kept secret. It may be very convenient to some that those counsels should be revealed; but the general rule is that they should be kept secret, and should not be revealed without the positive permission of the Sovereign to the party who thought proper to ask for it.

The DUKE of RICHMOND: I shall be very glad to give notice of my intention to put the question to my noble Friend tomorrow, though I cannot conceive that there was any necessity to give such notice. I can only wonder that the noble Duke, who has been so long in Parliament, did not think it very likely that he would be asked this question, and that he did not procure the Queen's consent. Certainly,

as the noble Duke has not procured that consent, I am afraid that the only thing I can do is, to ask the same question to-morrow; but I will first ask my noble Friend who has left office, whether he has not got the Queen's consent to state the reasons why he left the Government?

LORD STANLEY: I had been in great hope that I should have been spared the necessity of offering myself to the attention of your Lordships in the course of this evening; but my noble Friend having appealed to me, I beg to say, that I have the permission of Her Majesty to make such explanations of the cause of my retirement from the service of Her Majesty, and of my differing from my Colleagues, with whom I for four years acted with the utmost cordiality; but though I have Her Majesty's most gracious permission to make such explanations for the vindication of the course I myself adopted, in doing that which no public man has a right to do for a light or trivial cause, or without sufficient grounds of public interest (I mean that of abandoning the position in which he has been placed by the favour of his Sovereign, and for which he is responsible alike to his Sovereign and the country, for the way in which he exercised the functions of his office); yet I am sure my noble Friend will perceive that it is impossible for me to make the statement he invites me to make, with any feelings of justice to those who were my late Colleagues in office, and for whom, though separated officially, I have the most unfeigned respect, regard, and esteem. My Lords, I cannot state the grounds of my own retirement, without stating what were those measures contemplated by other Members of the Cabinet—without entering into the details of those measures, and the objections I entertained to them. I cannot enter into a vindication of my own conduct, for an apparent abandonment of that public duty which devolves on every member of a Government, without disclosing prematurely and unfairly to my noble Friends and the country, those plans which were in contemplation when I was in the Cabinet, and which may since have been modified or altered; to which additions may have been made; to which certain qualifications—I know not whether they have or not—may have been added, of a character to counteract the mischievous tendency of the measure to which I objected. My Lords, I trust that your Lordships and my noble Friend will be satisfied, if I make this statement only; that there was one, and one only, subject on which there existed a difference between my late Colleagues and myself; and that question had relation to the degree, and amount, and nature of the protection to be afforded to the domestic industry of the country. Upon that subject a measure was proposed, and intended to be submitted to your Lordships, which I conceived to be neither justified by the state of the country, nor called for by any change of circumstance since 1842; and to which, therefore, as a Member of the Government, I felt it was impossible that I should undertake the responsibility of being a party to their being submitted to your Lordships. My regret is, that my disagreement is with noble Friends with whom I have had no previous difference. I had placed before me the choice of separating from my Colleagues, for whom, as I have before stated, I entertained the most unfeigned esteem, and with whom I had had no previous difference, or to sacrifice my own individual opinion, and to sacrifice also what I conceived to be my own personal consistency and honour. [*Cheers from the cross-benches.*] I beg in this not to be understood as casting the smallest imputation upon the conduct of others, by the course I thought it fair to pursue; I had to consider the course which in my opinion my public duty and my private honour required me to pursue. I had no doubt that duty required me to intimate my dissent to a measure which obtained the sanction of a large majority of my Colleagues; and, so dissenting, humbly to tender to Her Majesty my resignation of office and the conduct of public affairs. I hope that my noble Friend will excuse me from making any further explanation. Having stated that I dissented from a measure proposed by my Colleagues, having dissented from the details of the measure, and from the opinions of my fellows, I trust your Lordships will not ask me now for any other statement; and nothing will give me more pleasure than the hope that I may not have to present myself to your Lordships upon this subject on any future occasion.

The EARL of HARDWICKE said, he had felt it his duty to rise to address their Lordships the moment he saw that the noble Lord on the Woolsack rose to put the question, whether the Address should go to the Throne without any exception. He could not agree in every part of that Address, though his loyalty and feeling towards the Throne led him to the opinion, that the

Address should go to Her Majesty without the slightest opposition. There was one passage in the Address, to which especially he could not agree; and with reference to which he rejoiced that he had given way to the noble Lord. He wished to follow in the steps of the noble Lord, with all his feelings of honour and good understanding; but it was highly necessary for the welfare of the country, more particularly at the present moment, that every one who was looked up to with respect in the councils of the nation, should give utterance to his opinions without any mental reservation whatever. Now, he saw in the Address a direct progress towards free trade; the extent of which no one could tell. It was only in 1842, that they had entered into an arrangement with respect to the duty to be paid upon corn; and on that arrangement he considered the question to be settled, at least till it should be shown that the wants and the difficulties of the people of this Empire required a change. He denied that a change was necessary in the present case; they had a better and a cheaper supply than heretofore; and, moreover, they had in that very Address the important statement that there never was more employment, and that the people never were better off, nor better supplied. He wished to know, if in times of prosperity these great and rapid changes were to be made, what they were to do in times of difficulty? He was not desirous to be led away on this occasion; he was more disposed to stop, than to allow his feelings to run on; he would rather stop short, than give to the feelings of others any offence, or be the cause of any bitterness towards those whom he deeply respected, and with whom he had been associated for ten years —nay, longer—ever since he had entered Parliament, in the year 1829. It was, therefore, with the greatest regret he found any occasion had arisen for differences on any one subject, between himself and his hon. and right hon. Friends, to whom he had always looked up, and than whom, he knew none better fitted to guide the affairs of the country at any time; but a change had come over the spirit of their dreams, whilst he was still as he had been. They had taken a course in which they honestly thought they were right; they had taken a course which they thought to be proper, and which might ultimately turn out to be so. He confessed, however, that he was not able to agree with them in this course; he could not see where it would stop, or that there would be any security to the country for the settlement of these important questions. He would, rather than see the daily diminution of protection—if he might use the term not offensively—have the greater certainty of a proposal to put it aside altogether; for many more would go along with these constant changes than would be found to give their support, if an appeal were distinctly made to the country to say whether they would go on in a course which would lead ultimately to a direct taxation for the purpose of paying the debt and bearing the burdens of the country, without either Customs or Excise. For these reasons, he dissented from the Answer to the Speech which Her Majesty's Ministers had put into the mouth of the Queen: and he thought, that with these views he could not assent to the passage in the Address proposed by his noble Friend.

The MARQUESS of LANSDOWNE: The noble Duke on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond) has said, that there are noble Lords on this side of the House who are persons from whom the country has a right to expect explanations of the political transactions which have recently taken place. I am induced to rise, therefore, for the purpose of saying that upon this subject I entirely subscribe to the propriety of the line taken by my noble Friend the late Secretary of State for the Colonies. I rise also for the purpose of stating that, like him, and in the expectation of an explanation being made in this House, and made this night, of the motives which led to the late resignation of the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, I thought it my duty, as my noble Friend has done, to obtain permission from Her Majesty to explain that part in those transactions which I took myself, and which was taken by a noble Friend of mine, who was had recourse to by Her Majesty upon that occasion; but it certainly never occurred to me to use that permission till an explanation should have been made by Her Majesty's Government; and, in the absence of any such explanation, I conceive it would be most improper for me to enter, even for a moment, on that important subject. All I can state is, that when the proper moment shall arrive, having obtained permission, and being prepared to have made the statement this night, I shall be ready to state what part I recently took. On that part of the subject, therefore, I say no more; but I rise, like-

wise on this occasion to refer to that other more important part of Her Majesty's Speech, and of the Address in reply to it, which even the important considerations to which I have already adverted do not so completely overshadow as to drive it from a prominent place in the public mind—I mean the discussions with the United States of America, with respect to the territory of Oregon. I rise to express my approbation of the intentions expressed in the Speech from the Throne, and my satisfaction at learning the determination of Her Majesty's Government to omit no efforts to maintain, what is of so much importance to the interests of the world, a peace between this country and the United States, without sacrificing any of the honour of this country; and, in conclusion, I must say, that if, with the maintenance of our honour, those efforts should be made, the Government will meet with the unanimous support of every party in England. And I could not allow this evening to pass without a cordial expression of my approval of the manner in which this subject has been adverted to in the Speech from the Throne.

LORD BROUGHAM: I wish before proceeding with the subject matter of the Address, to allude to remarks made by my noble Friend, and to one remark of the noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonial Department. I cannot proceed to do so, without expresing, as I feel it my bounden duty to do, my perfect concurrence in every sentiment which has been expressed by my noble Friend who has just taken his seat, with respect to that portion of the Speech and Address which refers to the American question. I believe that if ever there were an instance in which the course of a Government has, as far as that course is known, already met, and in which as it becomes more fully disclosed will fully meet, with the universal and unanimous assent of a whole people, it is this instance in which the Government pledges itself first to leave no effort untried to preserve peace with America; then to leave no effort untried to call forth all the resources of this country, if, consistently with her honour, that peace cannot be preserved. It was a wise remark of Mr. Fox, in answer to some flippant remark about going to war, and plunging the country into the extremities of that greatest of all calamities, for mere honour—he (Mr. Fox) said, "Show me where a war with any people, on a calculation of interest or advantage, ever yet was justifiable in the eyes of rational men; but it is when the defence of a country is concerned; it is when the honour of a country is concerned; it is when that honour and that name, which every independent powerful country, unconquered and unconquerable like this, must preserve untouched and pure; it is to preserve that honour unassailed, and that name untarnished, that alone the dreadful extremity of war should be had recourse to." And if all efforts shall be made, as I hope and trust they will be made, consistently with our honour to preserve the inestimable blessings of peace; and if those efforts should fail, I believe the unanimous support of the people of this country will be given to the Government in that sad though necessary alternative. My Lords, I now come to matter, on which, unfortunately, there is not the same unanimity and the same calm reasoning, from some symptoms that have already to-night appeared, as are displayed with respect to the differences with America. My noble Friend on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond), in the course of his speech, as was fully to be expected of him, with even more than his usual degree of animation and zeal, brought forward a statement of the alarm and disappointment with which he has heard the portion of Her Majesty's Speech which seems to contemplate a relaxation—I suppose I may add, a further relaxation, because this is not the first that has been made—of the protection which the agricultural and commercial interests of this country now enjoy. My Lords, my opinions are well known. I differ widely from my noble Friend on the cross benches; but no such difference ever interrupted that cordial friendship towards him in private, and that heartfelt respect with which I have ever marked his public conduct, even when I most sincerely lamented the course which he is induced to pursue on State affairs. But as there are some matters on which I differ with him, so also are there some on which I so entirely agree with him, that I feel bound, in fairness towards him, and in justice to myself, to take this early opportunity of setting him right as to the charges in which, by his turning towards me, I seemed to be included in one portion, and a prominent portion, of his observations. I rather thank my noble Friend for speaking out, and for giving me an opportunity of doing so too. That I have been the advocate

for free trade; that I have been, to a certain extent, the advocate for an alteration in the protective system; that I went further and differed from my noble Friends near me, not merely as to the bread tax, to use a short word, but as to the whole policy of the protective system; that I called the attention of your Lordships again and again to the subject; that in 1839 I made a Motion to induce you and my noble Friends near me to call evidence and examine the question by means of testimony, is undeniable. My noble Friends near me, now my converts, resented, and defeated me with the help of the noble Duke. I then differed, and so far still, from my noble Friend on the cross benches. I entertain the same opinions still; but let me not be mixed up with those who hold them on grounds alien indeed to those on which I have ever acted. It was my opinion that an alteration in the commercial policy of this country with respect to corn, as well as to other commodities, was highly expedient; I will not say solely, but principally and beyond all comparison most chiefly wanted, not for the purpose of lowering the price of corn and food (which I never expected it could do, which I urged it could not do, which I endeavoured to show it had no tendency to do, any more than that the Corn Laws had a tendency to keep up the prices of food); but because I thought that it would tend to remodel the whole of our commercial system, and cause it to assume such a shape and position with respect to Foreign Powers as to prevent them from excluding our manufactures, by opening our ports to their corn, and such as would give us a reasonable prospect that their restrictions would be removed, and our manufactures allowed to penetrate into their foreign markets. I urged that question at great length, though it had not the effect of procuring an assent, either from your Lordships opposite, from those who, being half way, I never expected an assent from, or my noble Friends near me, in whom I might have had better hope. I was so defeated in that attempt, as to deprive me of any interest to press the matter again. My hope is, now, that I have lived to see better days, and that I have lived to see considerable changes of opinion. I hope and trust that, before we have gone through this subject, some of my poor opinions will now be more favourably received by this and the other House of Parliament. I was induced to rise first for the purpose of negativing the grounds which have been given for a change or modification in the Corn Laws, to what extent we do not know, for we are all in the dark as to the nature of the Government scheme My noble Friend on the cross benches said, that he had expected the settlement made in 1842 would be final, and that there could be no further change. Man and finality! Human wisdom and no progress! Increased age without more wisdom! Because in 1842 we assented to this measure, it is urged that in 1846 we can neither retrace our steps, nor take another line for the future. That is the doctrine of my noble Friend on the cross benches, and I grieve to say that it is the doctrine of my noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonial Department. It is no part of my policy. I have learned other lessons of practical wisdom; but most loudly do I express my disapprobation of the manner in which my opinions, important as I deemed them, and sincerely as I hold them, have formerly, but chiefly of late, been attempted to be supported. I stated, and noble Lords know what were my arguments—I refer to my Motion in the year 1839, and I shortly restate the ground on which I rested for the repeal or the modification of the Corn Law system—I did not, because I could not, hold out to the people of this country—I could not honestly hold out to them that it would make bread cheap. I could not hold out that the Corn Laws did that against their doing which I have argued so often in vain till now. I did not argue that the Corn Law was the cause of famine, that it was the cause of disease, that it was the cause of crime, or that it was the cause of mortality in this country. I would rather set my right hand into the fire till it was consumed than set it to a document which pretends that the Corn Law is the cause of crime, of famine, of disease, and of death. If I had so thought, how was it that I, sitting during four years in the Council of the Sovereign, had never stepped forward to change a law which caused famine, and disease, and crime, and death? I stated what I thought was the fault of the Corn Law, and I recommended a repeal or alteration on grounds very different from those whose language I reprobate and disclaim. Their opinion ought not to be taken as mine; their statements are not mine; respecting some of them highly, yet with them I am as much at issue on the one side, as I am with my noble Friends on the cross benches on the other side. But there is another class who are agitat-

ing this great question, for whose arguments, and whose conduct, my respect is wanting; and when my noble Friend on the cross benches turned round to me and appealed to me, as he had a right to do, I must endeavour to answer him, and I must hope I shall do so satisfactorily. If I am asked am I one of the League, or one of the followers of the League, or one of the allies, or one of the accomplices of the League; or if I were to be asked, "Are their means your means?" then I should unhesitatingly answer, "God forbid!" From the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League, I differ even more than from those who stand forward as the friends and advocates of protection. Much reflection—long observation—no little experience, has convinced me that a representative government—the best of all forms upon which a government can be administered—the greatest political discovery of modern times—the most important improvement in national polity—the only means which men can possess of reconciling freedom and popular government with extent of territory—I say, all reflection has convinced me that it is of the very nature and essence of representative government, that when you have once chosen your representatives, you should leave the government in their hands; and that it is the representative that is to speak thenceforth, and not the constituent body. That is, and always has been, my deliberate opinion. And this leads me to step aside and answer the question of my noble Friend on the cross benches, who says, all he wants is an appeal to the people. Though it may be wholesome to appeal to the people in certain circumstances — though it may be right and necessary to give them a general and useful control over their representatives at such times and under such circumstances as would render that control conducive to the public good; yet, if there is anything more clear to me than another, it is this proposition, that it is neither wise nor wholesome to make such an appeal at a moment when the nation is in a ferment—when they are in a state of strong excitement upon a particular and exciting question. [*Some Noble Lords said:* "There was the case of the Reform Bill."] I do not mean to deny that there are cases of such vast and paramount importance as absolutely to require that the Executive Government should appeal to the people. Where there is a difference of opinion between the Executive Government and the Commons' House of Parliament—I am expressing now the A, B, C, the ordinary language of the Constitution—where there is a difference between the two Houses of Parliament, an appeal to the people is usually considered as necessary, because it is the only course to take, in order that the Government may go on. But if you are, each time a measure is called one of importance — if you are, upon questions that may interest each particular party in Parliament, to dissolve, and appeal to the people, I say there is an end to all representative government, and you are not governed by the representatives of the people, but by the multitude—ay, even by the mob. Is that event less likely to happen—is that event of a tumultuous and passionate, and ignorant, and not a calm and learned decision of the subject, less likely to occur when the question is the exciting one of cheap bread, on the one hand, and agricultural protection on the other? If I were to single out from all political questions any one upon which it is expedient not to make these constant appeals to the people, I should say it is precisely such a question as this. But now, with respect to the body which my noble Friend on the cross benches has not for the first time referred to; my objection is this, that after having chosen representatives, these very people take out of the hands of such representatives the whole discussion of this question; and, by agitating the country upon it, as others are agitating Ireland for a repeal of the Union, withdrawing the subject from the decision of Parliament, from the representatives of the people, and placing it in the hands of the constituencies—the people themselves. That is the conduct those agitators have pursued—that is the course in which they are proceeding. I am about to refer to the conduct now in great favour with that body, some of whose members are highly respectable, others of whom are very much less to be respected, as it happens in all great bodies. But be they all ever so respectable as individuals, the course of their conduct as a body is what I am arguing upon. I find they are levying immense sums of money with one avowed object, which is a perfectly lawful object. And I appeal to my noble and learned Friends who are clustered together upon the Woolsack at this moment, whether or not I am right in my opinion when, in point of law, I say that it is a perfectly legal ob-

ject. They break no Act of Parliament—they violate no common law, in collecting a sum of a quarter or a half million, or whatever it may turn out to be, for the avowed purpose of purchasing votes in different counties. ["No, no," *in the course of which some noble Lord said,* "Purchasing freeholds."] Purchasing freeholds! When I said votes, I used a short expression. It is, however, by this interruption suggested to me that if they should find they can more easily buy voters than votes, they will do so; that disclaimer about purchasing votes was calculated to raise some suspicion—it was a negative pregnant. The votes might be called freeholds, or they might not; but this was clear, that there existed a determination to acquire Parliamentary influence by some mode of pecuniary expenditure, and there was clearly no change of name respecting the matter by the noble Lord who said, "No, no." Now, I say it is a perfectly lawful act—it violates no statute—it goes against no branch of the common law—that a person should collect money for the purpose of purchasing freehold qualifications; and they brag that in the county with which I am connected they have bought two thousand; and their boast is, that they will run the opposite side far harder than I ever did in my three contests; but I don't think they will come much nearer than I did after six days' polling of the county; I was only defeated by, I think, eight-and-thirty. In North and South Lancashire, they say they are going to get two thousand more—two thousand in each division—and so on throughout all the country, until they get a hundred county seats, and thus influence the whole Parliament. And for that purpose some men send a thousand pounds, some only five. Now, I cannot say that the zeal is in proportion to the money; but in the case of the small contributors there may be great zeal, though little cash. I do not hesitate to give my opinion in favour of the perfect legality of the course which the gentlemen of the Anti-Corn-Law League and their contributors of all sizes are pursuing. My friend Mr. Atwood, and other rich persons, who, perhaps, have millions of money at their disposal, may meet together and subscribe for the purpose of purchasing qualifications; they now have the benefit of my opinion that it is a perfectly legal act—that they have a perfect right to buy up those votes; and that in doing so they violate no law, either common or statute. Mr. Bentham was in the habit of saying, that there was no such thing as an unconstitutional doctrine or an unconstitutional proceeding. Mr. Bentham contended that everything legal was perfectly constitutional, and that some people called that unconstitutional to which they themselves objected—any thing, said he, that anybody don't like is unconstitutional. Mr. Bentham agreed with those who held that every thing strictly legal was perfectly constitutional. I can, however, show a case which every man will admit to be most legal, but most unconstitutional. Every one knows that the Sovereign of this country can create an indefinite number of Peers. The Crown, for example, can create 500 Peers: and as the Sovereign is not restricted with respect to numbers, so there is no limitation with regard to rank—any description of person may be made a Peer of the realm. The Sovereign, then, might march into this House 500 persons possessing an undoubted right to seats in the House of Lords. A battalion of the guards may be marched into the House to overwhelm us with their votes, and carry any measure which the Crown thinks proper to propose. This would be a perfectly legal exercise of the Crown's undoubted prerogative. But if the Lord Chancellor put the Great Seal to such patents of creation, assuredly the instant this act fell upon the ear of the Commons' House of Parliament, the crime which he had committed—perfectly lawful, but equally unconstitutional—a gross breach of the Constitution—a foul violation of that Constitution—a high crime and misdemeanor—I say, so surely would the head of that high officer, if not in fact, at least by right and by desert, fall for the crime which he had perpetrated. My Lords, can the people, can associations, as they are called—can Repeal associations in one country, and League associations in the other, commit no unconstitutional acts? If I were asked my opinion as a friend of the people of this country—as a friend of the liberties of this country, as a friend to the Commons' House of Parliament, the seat of that people's power, and the sanctuary of those liberties—if I were asked, in any capacity, whether as a lawyer or a statesman, which of the two acts is the most unconstitutional, I should say, that act which violated the people's sanctuary by jobbing the seats there, and placing a body of men in that House for a particular purpose—sent there by force of gold subscribed for that purpose. Therefore, my Lords, it is my dis-

tinct and clear opinion as a lawyer, that the act is legal, but, as a constitutional lawyer, that such an act is a breach of the Constitution. I am not now for the first time stating this opinion. I acted upon it in Westmoreland, in the year 1820. I was asked, upon a canvass proving that we were nearly equal in amount of votes with the enemy—I was asked to sanction a measure for creating 500 votes, which could have been done by rent-charges; but my answer was a distinct negative. I refused to subscribe one farthing for it—I refused to countenance it. I said, you will be beaten at your own weapons. This may be done by an exchange of freeholds in two counties, without passing any money at all. But I also took my objection upon other and higher grounds, and said—"It is an unconstitutional act, and I am against multiplying votes—a course of which Parliament has again and again expressed its high disapproval." I will now, as I am naturally led to it, say a word on the subject of voluntary contributions. Those who thus subscribe, those who contribute to raise large funds without the authority of Parliament, must be prepared to abandon the constitutional doctrines of some of the ablest constitutional lawyers and highest constitutional authorities who have ever flourished in this country. There once were voluntary contributions entered into for the purpose of enabling the Crown to resist a foreign enemy, and maintain the integrity of the Empire. I suppose the contribution which I refer to was perfectly voluntary; therefore I say it was perfectly legal, for the purpose of enabling the Crown better to defend the country when the finances were at a low ebb—to enable the Crown the better to keep together the Empire when it was distracted by sedition. A contribution for that purpose, made by a loyal body of people, was as constitutional and praiseworthy a subscription as a voluntary contribution for the purpose of subverting the established policy of the Empire, nay, of distracting, of rending in twain the Empire itself—for I now allude to Ireland—by a repeal of the Union. I suppose that act of loyalty in '94 was as constitutional as the Repeal or League fund in these our days—many persons might think it more constitutional and more justifiable—yet, in 1794, Mr. Sheridan made a very eloquent speech against the dangerous and unconstitutional practice of raising contributions without the consent of Parliament. But those who think otherwise will have to combat higher authority than that of Mr. Sheridan—the late Sir Philip Francis supported him; and they will have to combat the opinion of a still greater authority than either, which was most strongly and vigorously expressed—I mean that of Mr. Fox; and, finally, they will have to combat the opinion of one whom I never can refer to without feelings of the deepest emotion—I mean my late lamented and venerated friend, Lord Grey, who closed the debate by an inimitable speech to the same purpose, and maintained, as strongly as any who had preceded him, the position that it was unconstitutional to raise money by voluntary contributions for a political object without the consent of Parliament. Lord Grey in one instance closed the debate, and in the other was a teller upon the division. The contribution was, on the other side, defended by Mr. Pitt, without denying the constitutional doctrine laid down by his antagonists, upon the ground that Parliament had by its votes sanctioned the use to which that money so raised by voluntary contribution was to be applied;—which cannot be said yet of the English subject, and I hope never will be said of the Irish subject of agitation. I may be quite wrong—those great statesmen may be quite wrong—and we live in days not much disposed to respect the authority of the great men of former times; but, at all events, I consider the ordinary course in this country ought to be only to levy money on the people by authority of Parliament and under the responsibility of the Executive Government—the sworn councillors of the Crown; and from the moment the sufferance of Parliament, the tolerance of the respectable classes, and the political—not to say party or factious—zeal of some, allow, and persist in allowing those things to be done with impunity, and without stint or control, the consequence of that will and must inevitably be to loosen the foundations of our Parliamentary Constitution—and to raise up a new trade in this country, which my love of free trade does not at all embrace, or reconcile me in the least to the contemplation of—I mean the trade—for it is driven as a trade, and for money—it is driven as a trade for the base lucre of gain under the pretext, as flimsy as it is stale, of patriotism—I mean the trade of constant political agitation. And be you well assured, my Lords, if that trade be continued by not being discouraged, and suffered by not being checked, there

never will be wanting persons to carry it on, because it requires, of all trades, the meanest accomplishments—of all trades, the least, the shortest apprenticeship. Of all trades it is the easiest to drive, for it asks not even the exertion of common industry; and as long as it is lucrative, which you now see it is in Ireland—and it is beginning to take root in England—so long will you have, now on Repeal, now on the Corn Laws, then on some other subject, on any subject except charity—which of course covers all transgressions, and to which my observations don't apply—but so long as you suffer it thus to thrive, you will have that trade driven by a multitude of those of whom I wish to speak with some respect if I can; but as they are not the most valuable members of society, neither are they the most peaceable subjects of the Crown. The sum and substance of my advice to your Lordships is the opinion which I have often stated, and now repeat, upon the propriety of adopting a wiser policy. Almost every other subject I do think of infinitely trifling importance when compared with this—the dislike which I entertain towards it (equal to that of my noble Friend on the cross bench to the principles of free trade) —the rooted, the inflexible, the unappeasable dislike which I have to what is called mob government—government by the pressure of the people, the "pressure from without." My Lords, I will have this country governed by the Crown and the Parliament. I will have the measures for the safety of the people of England digested by wise, prudent, experienced men. I will have those measures propounded by those men, discussed by that Parliament, adopted or rejected, according to their merits, and according to the deliberate opinion of their own legislators, influenced only by their reason, guided only by their own lights, and not obeying the pressure of the multitude from without. My Lords, I am reminded of what was said to me a little while ago, or by an ejaculation supposed to convey the opinion of those who uttered it, as to the inconsistency of my condemning sudden appeals to the people, when I remember my own conduct in advising the Crown to dissolve Parliament during the agitation of the Reform Bill. I stopt for a moment to vindicate myself from that charge of inconsistency; but I care not to be called inconsistent, if I feel that I am right. I sat at the helm of the imperial vessel for four years with others more worthy of that high post in that critical juncture—I sat at that helm and saw that vessel more than once in sight of the breakers; and I have no desire, before I descend to the grave, to see her in the same position again, taking the all but desperate hazard of being able to wear her round and bring her off. I have once been within sight of a revolution, and I have seen nothing so attractive in that view as makes me very desirous again to look upon it. I saw nothing so attractive in its glare as to make me plunge, like the insect which plunges to its destruction into the taper, or the fire, attracted by its light. Let the glare attract other men, and younger than me. To my eyes it has only the effect of intimidating and scaring me away, and not of drawing me towards the flame. My Lords, my noble Friend on the bench opposite (the Earl of Hardwicke) has talked of my right hon. Friend in the other House, who is at the head of Her Majesty's Government—perhaps my noble Friend on the cross bench it was who talked of him; but my noble Friend on the opposite bench said that, without any disrespect for the right hon. Baronet, or his Colleagues, for whom he professed, and, no doubt, in all sincerity, to entertain the utmost respect, attachment, and esteem, he differed with my right hon. Friend; I cannot avoid saying that I heard with regret the words to which he gave utterance—I will not, however, say anything further on the subject. But then the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) has said, that considering what had taken place at a former time on this question of the Corn Law, he could not now, with a due regard to his consistency and his own honour, take part in that which was about to be proposed—that he could not retain office—

Lord STANLEY: That, holding the same opinions as formerly, I could not do so.

Lord BROUGHAM: Oh! holding the same opinions! If that be the case, why my noble Friend would have been guilty of worse than inconsistency had he remained in office. It is not inconsistency to think one way and act another; it is downright dishonesty. I thought he had said that he could not in consistency and honour support those measures which he had before opposed, without reference to any supposed change of his own opinions: but it is self-evident that if he holds the same opinions now that he held before, of course he could not, honourably and consistently with those

opinions, act otherwise than he has done. My Lords, I have often heard the charge urged against myself and the Government with whom I acted, that we yielded to the pressure from without; but I declare that I never yielded to the clamour that was raised on any question. I hardly know of a question, except the one of the African Slave Trade, on which men may live half a century and never change one opinion; but on that great subject, and the kindred one of Slavery, I never for one instant yielded to clamour. And without any impeachment of the wisdom or the practical good sense—much more of the consistency and the honesty—of my noble Friend, I declare I have no respect for, or sympathy with, those persons who hold that we are only to advance as we are driven on by this pressure from without. I wish not to court or to belong to the suite of that class of persons, alike conceited and contemptible, who allow years to roll over them without increase of knowledge, and who are too proud to gather increase of wisdom from length of years. I consider it to be the duty of all to whom Providence has lent the blessing of long life to profit by the lessons of experience, and when experience proves they have been wrong, to correct the errors of which they have formerly been the supporters, and to guide their course in future by that which experience recommends as right. My Lords, I have thought it my bounden duty, because I retain my opinions in favour of free trade, to state the grounds on which I still wholly and entirely differ from the course that has been pursued by its professed advocates; to state, by way of discriminating, the grounds upon which I do not wholly agree, and never have agreed, with them; and, above all, to mark my disapprobation of every unconstitutional course that can be taken, even for propagating what I believe to be the truth, because I am firmly persuaded that the cause of truth can only lose, and not gain, by such unworthy means, though they are professed to be adopted for the purpose of advancing it. My Lords, I heartily approve of one branch of this Address, to which I venture to say there will be no objection made whatever—I allude to the necessity of taking into early consideration the disturbed state of Ireland. It is one in which I hope all party feelings will be cast to the winds; that with respect to it, at least, all parties will be found to coincide, for the purpose of strengthening the arm of the Irish Executive, in order to protect the lives and the property of the peaceful citizen and peasant.

The EARL of MALMESBURY: I will not detain your Lordships many minutes; but I must protest against that part of the Speech of the noble and learned Lord in which he alluded to what was said by my noble Friend on the cross bench. I perfectly agree with my noble and learned Friend when he says that it is on no trivial occasion that an appeal to the people must be made; but I put it to your Lordships—I ask your Lordships sincerely, on both sides of the House—do you believe that a measure which is to go the length we have a right to suppose the measure about to be proposed is to go, is called for by the state of the country? I do not think that even that great measure—all-important as it has been for good or ill—the Reform Bill, was more important than the measures now likely to be discussed by your Lordships; and I protest against the opinion and the doctrine, that the majority of the people are for those measures. We have no right to judge of the opinion of the English people, except through the last expression of that opinion which has been given by them. And no one will refuse me the assertion, when I say that the Parliament elected in 1841 was a protectionist Parliament. What right have you, then, to say that the people have changed their minds? I will not accept as a proof of that, that the Prime Minister may have changed his opinions. I will not accept as a proof of their change of opinion, the opinion of the Anti-Corn-Law League, or of your assemblies at Manchester, at Leeds, or here in London. I say, that the constitutional right of the people will lead them to expect, under such peculiar and momentous circumstances, that they ought to be appealed to; and they will tell you, that though their Representatives may have been seduced by the speeches of a talented and eloquent Minister—they will tell you that eloquence is an accomplishment, not a virtue, and that they would rather have a consistent Minister—one who will fulfil their purposes—than the most brilliant orator that ever addressed the House. My Lords, I should not have addressed these few words to you, were I not sincerely convinced in my own mind that the majority of the English people are for protection, and not for free trade; and I am convinced that if, in the course of this Session, any measure be brought up from the House of Commons—the House of Commons having

passed it—having for its principle an extended free trade, that your Lordships will act in a manner so as to induce—nay, even to force—the Minister to appeal to the people.

The Earl of RADNOR: My noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) objects to the Government for taking up this measure in consequence of "the pressure from without." Now I regret to say that Government will not take any such step without that very course which is thus objected to. The Government will not listen to reason—it will not attend to argument—it will only move when it is forced by the "pressure from without." I say this with sorrow and shame; but I wish now to ask my noble and learned Friend whether all the great measures which he has himself supported by his eloquence and wisdom have not been carried by "the pressure from without?" I ask him if the Reform Bill was not carried in Parliament by "the pressure from without?" I ask him if the Abolition of Slavery was not carried by "the pressure from without?" Whether the repeal of the Orders in Council was not carried by "the pressure from without?" I ask him whether Catholic Emancipation was not carried by "the pressure from without?" I ask whether the Reform Bill, whether the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts—a measure which I am quite sure he most cordially supported—was not carried by "the pressure from without?" My Lords, I lament that this should be the case—I lament that it should of necessity be the case; but I say that it is of necessity the case when the people outstrip, in intelligence, or in readiness to adopt good measures, the Government that is at the helm of affairs. My noble and learned Friend has laid down the constitutional doctrine respecting the raising of money—a doctrine which I, for one, will not deny; but it is evident that a constitutional Government must be limited by circumstances; for if the principle is carried to the length to which my noble and learned Friend seems to wish to push it, why then any subscription whatever may be attacked on the same ground. To be sure, he did say that charity would justify the raising of money in this way; and with respect to the question in hand, I say that of all acts it is the most charitable. But if the principle is carried out to the extent to which he seems inclined to carry it, any subscription of 100*l.* for a railroad would be an unconstitutional act. According to his doctrine, any subscription for the purpose for which I believe there is now one going on, of raising a large amount for improving the dwellings of the poor in the metropolis, would be unconstitutional. A subscription for the building of churches even would be unconstitutional. There is a limit, therefore, to this constitutional doctrine; and my noble and learned Friend admits that there is so, for the purpose of charity. Now, my Lords, I should not have risen and detained your Lordships at this length, because it appears to me that every noble Lord who heard my noble and learned Friend must have felt what I have ventured to submit to your Lordships; but my noble and learned Friend chooses to pronounce a violent philippic, to pass a violent censure upon the persons who are called the Anti-Corn-Law League—I have no objection to the name—in consequence of their raising money; and he says that they raise money for an unconstitutional purpose. That I deny. I am a subscriber to that fund myself; and I not only believe that I have done nothing unconstitutional, but I believe I have done that which is most consistent with charity, because I believe that no greater act of charity can be performed; I look upon it as money given to charity when it is subscribed to get rid of these accursed Corn Laws, and to forward the principles of free trade. And with that view—that being my honest opinion—I subscribe to the fund. My noble and learned Friend says, that it is raised for the purpose of buying freeholds—of buying votes. It is raised for no such purpose. The Anti-Corn-Law League buy no votes. They have carried on a system of agitation, I grant you; and the object of this money is for carrying on this system of agitation for five years longer, if it should be necessary to carry it on for five years. But they buy no votes—they give no votes. They not only buy no rent-charges, but they buy no votes. They persuade people to buy votes; they persuade people to lay out their own money, and to get votes for the purpose of giving effect to their own opinions. And as to its being unconstitutional, is it unconstitutional to persuade the people of this country—when you tell them they are free men, and have a right to form an opinion—to acquire for themselves the means of expressing that opinion? That is all that the League do with respect to votes; they facilitate the getting of votes. They open an office,

where certain persons meet; where certain persons who are willing to sell votes or qualifications, know that they can offer them; and where people who are inclined to buy votes may come and buy them. But they buy no votes; they do not make fagot votes; they do not, like some people, taking advantage of the 50*l.* clause, pack five or six of their sons and nephews upon the register for the same property. And, moreover, they tell you what they do; they do nothing in secret. They tell you that they meet and subscribe in order to put these votes on the register; and if they do wrong, they are liable to have these votes set aside as bad by the revising officer, in the same way as any other parties. I think there is nothing unconstitutional in that. And as to anything unconstitutional in agitation, I should like to ask my noble and learned Friend, if he thinks that agitation is so unconstitutional, whether he had no hand in the agitation for the abolition of slavery? Did he not rejoice in the success of that agitation? The noble and learned Lord, in one part of his speech, threw out the hint that the Anti-Corn-Law League were doing this for pelf and for profit to themselves. Far from it; for, to their infinite inconvenience, leaving their trade, leaving their factories—at a great expense of time, labour, and trouble—they exert themselves for this object; they exert themselves for a cause which they are convinced will be, not for their own good only, but for the good of the public generally. What was the origin of this Anti-Corn-Law League? It originated in the meeting of a few—I think not more than seven—merchants of Manchester, who found their trade in a most deplorable state, at a time when the trade of the country fell so very low. They prosecuted their views openly, for the purpose of rescuing themselves and the persons concerned in a similar trade, from the ruin which they saw impending over them. They were as much free-traders in the beginning, I believe, as my noble Friend on the cross bench (the Duke of Richmond); but in prosecuting their object they became free-traders; they found that what was good for them, was good for the people of every class of society; and they became as wholly and thoroughly free-traders, as my noble and learned Friend himself is; not for their own personal benefit, but because, in pursuing their own benefit, they found they were pursuing the benefit of the people at large. It is with that view, my Lords, that I, for one, am willing to advance and support, in every way I can, the operations of the Anti-Corn-Law League. I am sorry, indeed, that the thing should have been alluded to in this way. But if you have a Government that will not yield to the arguments and reasonings of my noble and learned Friend, we must resort to "that pressure from without" he so much dreads, to give that effect which his arguments ought to have produced, but which they have yet failed to produce. And yet he objects to agitation! Why, my noble and learned Friend began his speech by saying he was glad that this object would probably be brought about, and that this measure was likely to be introduced. I wonder how many years we should have been at work without this agitation if it had not been for the Anti-Corn-Law League coming in as allies to my noble and learned Friend. I dare say he might have got up, and would have got up, year after year, and have made a most eloquent speech in favour of free trade—in which he would have had my support and that of many of my noble Friends below the bar. But "the pressure from without" has been produced, and Government must yield to it. If they do not yield to it, wo to them and to the country. As to the feeling of the people of England, the noble Lord who spoke last said he did not believe that the majority of the country were in favour of free trade. I believe that the majority is in its favour; but we have neither of us the means of knowing. If the pressure is such that they are obliged to yield, I shall rejoice in that pressure; and that they are about to yield I feel very little doubt. I only address these few words to your Lordships to set my noble and learned Friend right about that which he has unjustly accused others of doing, which he says is not illegal, but unconstitutional. They do nothing of the sort; I beg him to understand that they do nothing of the sort—that they have no intention of doing anything of the sort. All they mean to do is, to continue an agitation which I think necessary, and which, upon other occasions, my noble and learned Friend has thought necessary too.

LORD BROUGHAM: Your Lordships, I am sure, will allow me a few words, in order to explain to my noble Friend that he is quite mistaken in those instances of agitation which he has referred to as those in which I was concerned, or had anything to do, with what is called agitation, or "the pressure from without." For in-

stance, he has referred to the Orders in Council: now we were engaged five weeks at hearing evidence at the bar of the House on that measure; and every day that that was going on it produced secession from our adversaries on the opposite side. And I do not believe that one public meeting was held on that question, except one at Manchester, and I believe one at Birmingham. It was after the thing was carried out that public meetings were held, to thank my noble Friend on the other side—late the Ambassador to America—and myself, that we had carried it out. Then as to the Catholic Emancipation—why, good God! was there ever any measure like the Catholic Emancipation Bill? It was the result of the reasoning and advocacy of thirty years.

The EARL of RADNOR: If this is explanation, I hope my noble and learned Friend will strictly confine himself to that; but really this is very like a second speech.

LORD BROUGHAM: All I mean to say is this, that the people of this country were against the Catholic Emancipation question. I certainly have a great respect for my noble Friend, who is, I am sure, no party to the scurrilous abuse of the League, however he may support them. But, my Lords, this is what they say: "You will very soon have a very different champion in Westmoreland to what you had in 1820 or 1826; but it will be because we the League (and this was put forth by order of the League) are going to put 2,000 additional voters on the roll for Westmoreland." Why, the whole number of freeholders was but 4,000. In the poor little county of Westmoreland there are 2,000 people who are to subscribe 50*l.* each—for that is about the worth of a freehold in that county—for love of the League. Now, I should like to know who are those 2,000 men in Westmoreland, who are ready to give 100,000*l.* of their own proper money for the sake of repealing the Corn Laws. Why, it is quite clear that the object of the League is to facilitate, in one way or another, the acquisition of freeholds. My Lords, I certainly consider that there is nothing more justifiable than a man arguing the question, and discussing and reasoning on the subject. I never said the reverse; all I object to is, "the pressure from without." As to the abolition of the Slave Trade, I never attended a meeting in my life on that question. I attended one meeting on the subject of the Emancipation Bill, and that was all. And, I believe, that if ever a thing was carried by the force of reason, effecting its object in the course of the long period of half a century, it was the Emancipation Bill and the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The EARL of RADNOR: As to the Emancipation Bill, to which my noble and learned Friend has just referred, in March, 1829, that measure was carried by a majority; a similar majority having voted but in the month of July or August preceding, against the question. And there is the proof which my noble and learned Friend produces of the effect of reasoning during half a century.

The MARQUESS of SALISBURY: Really, my Lords, I must rise to order.

The EARL of RADNOR: I spoke to order when my noble and learned Friend was on his legs the second time; and I said if it was to be a second speech, it ought to be understood and treated as such. And I say, with respect to that very Emancipation Bill, it was avowed in the House, if my memory does not fail me, by the noble Duke sitting opposite to me (the Duke of Wellington) that his opinions were not changed, but that it was necessary to do it to avoid a civil war. [*Cheers, and a gesture of dissent from the Duke of Wellington.*] I remember the words well; and they confirm the opinion which I always had, and shall always continue to have of that noble Duke;—"it was necessary, in order to avoid a civil war;" and (said he) "My Lords, I have seen a great deal of war, but of all wars the most horrible is a civil war." Now, with respect to Westmoreland, I cannot undertake to explain what may be the intention of others, but this I do explain, that it is no intention of the Anti-Corn-Law League to create votes or to buy votes; but their object and their intention is, to induce others to possess themselves of the franchise. Their efforts have been exerted in Westmoreland, in Surrey, and in Middlesex, and, I believe, with success, to encourage persons to qualify themselves to vote, in order that they may be able to give effect to their opinions in the Legislature of the country.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON: My Lords, with your Lordships' permission, I will explain both the words and the sentiments expressed by me, God knows how many years ago; but there are records of the proceedings of those days, and if the noble Earl will be so kind as to look at those records, he will see that he has not quoted either my words or my sentiments

correctly. I positively and distinctly deny that the words quoted by the noble Earl, or the sentiments mentioned by him, were either the words or the sentiments which I used.*

The MARQUESS of SALISBURY: I shall not trespass upon the attention of your Lordships for more than a few moments; because the occasion of an Address to Her Majesty is not the most opportune for discussing questions which must, in the course of the Session, come before your Lordships for consideration. I cannot, however, refrain from expressing my surprise at the declaration made by the noble Earl opposite, that the proceedings of the body calling themselves the Anti-Corn-Law League are not illegal; because I had always understood that for any body of men to conspire to upset the law was an illegal act. The noble Earl has applied a term to the present Corn Law, which I believe has never been applied by any Member, either of your Lordships' House, or, I may add, by any Member of the other House of Parliament. The noble Earl said, that "the Corn Law was an accursed law." I beg to say, my Lords, that I do not subscribe to that phrase. I also understood the noble Earl to say that "it was desirable that the pressure from without should act upon Parliament." I am sorry to say that occasions have been when that pressure from without has acted upon those conducting the affairs of the State; but it is certainly the first time I have ever heard it deliberately avowed by any noble Lord in his place in Parliament, that he thought it desirable to bring that pressure from without to operate upon your Lordships to carry measures, and that it was by such means only that he could hope to carry such measures. This was, certainly, a pretty distinct and strong avowal on the part of the noble Earl (the Earl of Radnor). At the same time that I intend to vote for the Address, I beg, my Lords, to guard myself from being supposed, in the slightest degree, to be pledged to those portions of the Speech which are adduced as grounds for the present commercial prosperity of the country. I cannot, for one, admit that the relaxations which have taken place in our commercial policy have conduced to the prosperity of the country. Whether those relaxations will ultimately do so or not, remains to be seen. I confess my opinion is that they will not. I confess my opinion to be that the prosperous state of the country has gone on in defiance of those relaxations. At the same time, my Lords, I am prepared to give the best consideration in my power to all those measures which Her Majesty's Government may deem it their duty to bring forward, when they shall be presented to your Lordships in detail, deeming it that I, at the present moment, am acting wisely in abstaining from offering one single word of remark upon what one may possibly anticipate the nature of those measures will be. But, in doing this, I am anxious to avoid laying myself open to the supposition that, by assenting to the present Address, I am pledging myself to support any of those measures.

The DUKE of BEAUFORT was understood to say, that, without pretending to discuss any measures which were not yet before their Lordships, he felt called upon to protest against the extreme latitude of the expressions used in the Speech from the Throne in favour of those measures of relaxation in our commercial policy, which measures he believed to have been most injurious to the best interests of the country.

The Address was then agreed to.

* See Hansard, 2nd Series, vol. xxi. p. 46.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON moved that the Earl of Shaftesbury be the Chairman of the Public Committees of their Lordships' House.

The LORD CHANCELLOR, in seconding the Motion, said that the ability, judgment, and, above all, the firmness which his noble Friend had manifested in the discharge of the duties of that office, induced him to believe that the Motion would be carried *nemine dissentiente*.

The Motion having been agreed to,

The EARL of SHAFTESBURY thanked their Lordships for the honour they had thus for the thirty-third time conferred upon him.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Thursday, January 22, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW WRITS.—*(during Recess)* For Southwark, *v.* Benjamin Wood, Esq., dec.; For Wigan, *v.* Peter Greenall, Esq., dec.; For Warwick County (Southern Division), *v.* Sir John Mordaunt, Bart., dec.; For Windsor, *v.* John Ramsbottom, Esq., dec.; For Antrim, *v.* John Irvine, Esq., dec.; For Woodstock, *v.* Viscount Loftus, now Marquess of Ely; For Hertford County, *v.*

Viscount Grimston, now Earl of Verulam; For Buckingham, *v.* Sir John Chetwode, Bart., dec.

Now Ordered.—For Selkirk, *v.* Alexander Pringle, Esq., Manor of Hempholme; For Newark, *v.* Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, Secretary of State; For Bute, *v.* Hon. James Stuart Wortley, Judge Advocate General; For York County (West Riding), *v.* Hon. John Stuart Wortley, now Lord Wharncliffe; For Cork City, *v.* Francis Stack Murphy, Esq., Manor of Northstead; For Cashel, *v.* Joseph Stock, Esq., Chiltern Hundreds; For Sussex (Eastern Division), *v.* George Darby, Esq., Chiltern Hundreds; For Midhurst, *v.* Sir Horace Beauchamp Seymour, Chiltern Hundreds.

NEW MEMBERS SWORN.—For Chichester, Lord Arthur Lennox; For Southwark, Sir William Molesworth, Bart.; For Warwick, Sir Charles Douglas; For Wigan, Hon. James Lindsey; For Cirencester, William Cripps, Esq.; For Linlithgow, William Baillie, Esq.; For Antrim, Sir Horace Beauchamp Seymour; For Windsor, Colonel George Alexander Reid; For Woodstock, Lord Alfred Churchill; For Warwick (Southern Division), Lord Brooke; For Sunderland, George Hudson, Esq.; For Belfast, Lord John Ludford Chichester; For Buckingham, Colonel John Hall; For Hertford County, Thomas Plumer Halsey, Esq.; For Kirkcudbright, Thomas Maitland, Esq.; For Hereford, Sir Robert Price, Bart.

PUBLIC BILLS.—1°. Outlawries.

PRIVATE BILLS.*

The House met at two o'clock, and attended HER MAJESTY in obedience to Message:—

And being returned, MR. SPEAKER acquainted the House that he had issued Warrants for *New Writs* during the Recess (*See Minutes*).

MR. SPEAKER *reported* HER MAJESTY'S SPEECH, and read it to the House.

ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO THE SPEECH.

LORD F. EGERTON said: In rising, Sir, on this occasion to address the House, for the purpose of proposing an Address to Her Majesty in reply to the Speech we have just heard read, it is my misfortune that I cannot prefer the same grounds for asking your indulgence which many hon. Gentlemen who have undertaken a similar duty have had it in their power to plead. A reference to *Hansard*—and this is the only reference I intend to make to that authority in the course of my observations—testifies, I regret to say, to the fact, that precisely twenty years have elapsed since, under the auspices of Mr. Canning, I stood in a similar situation to that I now occupy. I can truly say, however, that the intervening years have taught me any other Parliamentary lesson rather than that of confidence in my own discretion, or reliance on any powers I possess, as entitling me to claim the indulgence or command the sympathies of this House. I hope, therefore, that on other grounds—on the ground of the importance of the juncture which calls us together—and of the difficulty which even the masters of debate in this place must feel in rising to a level with the importance of these circumstances—the House will extend to me that consideration and indulgence which, in 1826, I perhaps had a better claim to ask, but certainly had no greater need to receive. I think it will be for the convenience of the House that, in the brief review it is my duty to take of the topics adverted to in Her Majesty's Speech, I should, in the first place, shortly refer to the earlier topics of that Speech, which I have little apprehension will be regarded with feelings other than those of satisfaction. I have little apprehension that this House, or the country at large, will receive with any other feeling than that of unanimous concurrence the observations in Her Majesty's Speech as to the state of our relations with France. Believing, as I do, that the peace and happiness of Europe, and, more than that, the progress of civilization and good government throughout the world, depend upon no single circumstance which human sagacity can control more directly than on the continuance of amicable relations between those two countries, which, I am proud to think, are heading the march of civilization. Believing that any coldness in those relations would chill and retard, and that any positive rupture between the two countries would throw that progress back in its course, I receive with unalloyed satisfaction that paragraph in Her Majesty's Speech to which I now allude. Rejoicing as I do in such a guarantee for the peace and happiness of the world, I must undoubtedly look with proportionate distrust and anxiety to any other quarter with respect to which I find myself compelled to speak with less entire confidence as to the maintenance of peaceful relations. I cannot fail to perceive, with deep anxiety and regret, the possibility that England may be called upon to maintain her honour, and to assert her right to protect her loyal subjects in every part of the world, however distant, by any other arguments than

* In consequence of the immense mass of Private Bills likely to be presented to Parliament during this Session, their lengthy titles, the labour and expense of preparing and printing them, and the comparative inutility of the list when done, it has been determined to omit them from the daily Minutes, and to give them when complete in a tabular form, at the end of the last volume of the Session. Nor, it is conceived, will this cause any inconvenience, since a Table is published at intervals by Order of the House, in which the information may, in a great measure, be obtained.

those of patient, temperate, and friendly discussion. But most especially must I regret the possibility that any difference or difficulty should exist between ourselves and those with whom a community of blood and language forms an union not less binding than those strong ties of mutual requirements and friendly intercourse which have grown up between us to the advantage of both, and which the results of human skill and invention have so largely, in later years, facilitated and matured. My only consolation is, that I believe neither the present Government, nor any Government which in the course of political events could hold its place in the counsels of this country, could look at any such possible differences with other feelings than an ardent desire to maintain, by every means consistent with the honour and the just rights of both nations, the most cordial terms of amity and friendship with that great confederation, the United States. Apart from all these considerations, and utterly independent of them, there is no portion of Her Majesty's Speech that will, I am convinced, receive more deliberate concurrence on our part than that which suggests for the consideration of this House some extension of our means of national defence. On this subject I will only say for myself individually, that if all allusion to the necessity of that extension had been omitted from the Speech, I should have doubted the wisdom and precaution of those who had advised such a course. I pass however, to other topics which engross more deeply public attention, and with respect to which I should be insincere in saying that I anticipate that they will be regarded in this House with the same unanimity which will, I trust, be manifested with reference to those subjects to which I have just referred. I cannot dissemble to myself that I am addressing the House at a juncture when, at the instance of the responsible advisers of the Crown, topics of more than ordinary magnitude, and of more than temporary interest, are suggested for its future and early consideration. I cannot doubt, that the intent and bearing of that invitation, coming, as it does, upon a train of political events fresh in the recollection of hon. Members, and consequent on those events—I cannot doubt that that invitation to consider the whole state of those laws which have hitherto regulated the importation of various foreign commodities into this country, will be received without surprise by this House or the country, but with an interest which no length of expectation could have diminished. If I did not concur in the propriety and necessity of that invitation, I could not consistently have undertaken the duty I am now endeavouring to discharge. That concurrence is, on my own part, unqualified. But if I had been unable to appear in the situation I now occupy—if my opinions had been such as would have prevented me from undertaking this office, still I should have hesitated before I incurred the responsibility of pronouncing, by any vote of mine in this House, that those subjects did not deserve that serious and early consideration to which the House is invited in Her Majesty's Speech. I have heard many Royal Speeches read, Sir, by yourself and your predecessors in that chair, and I have heard many Addresses in reply moved and discussed in this House; but certainly it was never my fortune to hear any speech which was altogether palatable to all parties in this House. I have, however, frequently seen all parties in the House agree with unanimity to the Address in reply to the Royal Speech, by the uniform assertion of the principle that no man giving his assent to the Address on such an occasion is thereby bound to any subsequent course of action. I hold that even the mover of the Address is not more restricted or fettered than any other hon. Member as to his future course of action in this House with respect to any questions that may be propounded for its consideration. Upon that principle I might, upon this occasion, deal largely in generalities; but, if the House does not consider it a departure from the strict discharge of the functions I have undertaken, I am anxious to take this opportunity of avowing that, with respect to the important subject so soon to be brought under the consideration of the House, my individual opinions have undergone a considerable change. I am aware my opinions have not that influence or authority with others which would entitle me to inflict upon the House a long explanation or defence of any change or modification which has taken place in them. Still, I feel that nothing but my insignificance can shelter those opinions from that inquiry which the public claims a right to institute as to the motives of those who, with regard to any matters of great national concern, avow a change in their views and sentiments; and I, for one, should be sorry, even on this occasion, to shrink in any respect from that investigation. This much,

at least, I will say—that no defence of mine will rest upon the example of others, or on any change or modification of opinions which may have been at any former period avowed by those whose eminence in public estimation makes their reputation a matter of consequence to the country at large, while mine is only of importance to myself. The vindication of any modification my opinions have undergone shall rest alone upon my observation of events, and a consideration of the state and prospects of the country. I have feared and hesitated to interfere with that system of restriction upon imports which I found interwoven with the whole state of our commercial relations. I have, on the best consideration I could give to the state and interests of the country, arrived at the conclusion that the time has arrived when we should take an opportunity — and take it now —to reconsider the whole system of those laws which regulate our commercial intercourse, with a view of ultimately departing from a principle hitherto maintained—a principle which endeavours, by the exclusion, or prohibition, or restrictive admission of foreign commodities, to encourage our home manufactures. When I use the term "home manufactures," let me not be misunderstood. I consider the products of the earth, as prepared for the food of man, as much a manufacture as any other. I regard the earth as a machine, and the largest landowners in this country as master manufacturers, and nothing else. Holding these views, I consider that, whether we apply the principle of protection to our system of Government, or whether we withhold it, it should be applied or withheld impartially, with regard to all the various departments of the industry of the country. It is my hope and belief, without being acquainted with the details of the measures which may be proposed to Parliament by Her Majesty's Government, that when they are propounded to the House, I may be able to give them my support. I hope they will be such as, in dealing with this important question, will be compatible with the broad principles I have laid down; and that they will embrace, with a comprehensive and statesmanlike grasp, the various departments of the industry of the country, which can come within the terms of my proposition. I have, I freely acknowledge, opposed the proposal of the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) opposite for a fixed duty on the importation of corn, when that measure was intended, as I believed, to be permanently embodied in the Statute-book. I have now arrived at the conclusion, that restrictions, permanently applied to the introduction of foreign commodities, should no longer be adopted by the Legislature of this country. When the noble Lord brought forward his proposition, I expressed the opinion, which I still maintain, that if we are to apply restrictions to the importation of foreign corn, with the object of fixing a certain standard of remuneration for the British cultivator, or creating that steadiness of price which has been anticipated from such legislation, the "sliding scale," as it is called, is the better machinery for that purpose. I have seen reason, as I have already stated, to change my opinions on the policy of these restrictive laws; but I have not departed from the opinion I have always entertained as to the comparative advantage of a fixed duty and the sliding scale. The Legislature has felt its way largely in this matter, with respect to the articles of wool, cattle, and timber. I am not going, on this occasion, to trouble the House with figures and statistical returns; but I will venture to say this, that when the great accounts of the country come before you, and you have an opportunity of investigating rigidly the effects of those alterations, you will find that in every important instance the results have been such as to justify the hopes entertained of the success of those changes. I myself have been compelled to be a somewhat close observer of the connexion between the prices of provisions, and the employment and happiness of the people. Accident has cast my lot in the midst of a dense population, with respect to a large portion of which, this accident has made me a distributor of work and wages; and I have seen the operation of what I believe to be the connexion between the prices of provisions, and the happiness and employment of the people in various conditions. Among the population to which I have alluded, when there arose, from natural causes I believe, though protracted beyond their natural limits by derangements in the commercial intercourse with the United States, any difficulty in the state of the labour market for men to find employment at their regular occupations, I, as well as others, have endeavoured at such times, to find temporary employment for those who could not obtain regular work. It has happened that, in the course of my endeavours, prices have fallen again, a reaction has taken place, and provisions have become cheap; and but for that, I have felt how vain would have been all our

exertions to effect that which we had in view. Changes have since taken place, and I, as well as others, have had to struggle with a difficulty of a far less ordinary character —the difficulty of finding labourers for the work we desired to be performed. In the return of these more prosperous days, I trace again the connexion between abundance and employment. However, in the midst of this general tide of prosperity an interruption very recently occurred ; and I believe that I can give some history of the occurrence in words better than my own, by referring to a circular which I received by post from Manchester a day or two ago, and which by accident I read, for it is not always that one reads printed circulars. In this circular it is stated that—

"The elements of permanent advantages were everywhere visible in the year 1844, and that the expectations formed with repect to the year 1845 were realized in the better half of the year ; trade was going on, wages rising, &c. Notwithstanding the drawbacks that had to be contended against in the last quarter of 1845, trade was satisfactory on the whole, for profits were realized by our spinners and some of our manufacturers in the first nine months of the year. Those who attribute all the mischief to the late reaction and the exorbitant railway schemes, take a one-sided view of the case, and mistake the effect for the cause. The railway schemes, no doubt, aggravated the evil, but the main cause originated in the deficiency of the harvest, and the failure of the potato crop, at a time when a similar catastrophe occured on the continent of Europe, and rendered an immediate supply of provisions almost impossible."

I ask any gentleman connected with the manufactures of Lancashire—any one who is acquainted with the situation of Manchester, Bolton, or Ashton, whether the period to which this circumstance alludes did not cause the memory involuntarily to recur to those times in 1841 and 1842, which I do hope will never again occur in this country ? I ask whether men's hearts did not fail them for fear of the prospect of any thing like high prices occurring again in those manufacturing districts ? But I may be told, and fairly told, that the abundance of which I have spoken, and which lessened the evils which threatened us, has been coexistent with those restrictive laws which I propose to consider. Others will go further, and say that the abundance is even the consequence of those restrictive laws, and that it may cease and determine with their abolition, or material reduction. Whatever change of opinion I may have undergone, I certainly have no right to question the sense, sagacity, or still less the sincerity of those who continue to entertain those ideas. The time has been when, with equal sincerity, I have entertained them myself; but my observation has led me to believe that if you, as a Government, undertake to control and regulate the supply of the means of subsistence to the community, you will find that it is difficult, nay, impossible for you, spread the public table with what profusion you may, to satisfy those who would still retire from the feast with appetites not altogether satiated, and with minds not fully convinced that they have had sufficient for their health, and that all that remains for them is to pray that they may be truly thankful. The abundance, which you call sufficient, but which no man can call excessive, is, after all, but matter of comparison.

"Claudite jam rivos, pueri ; sat prata biberunt ;"

this, indeed, would be a dangerous principle for a Minister to act upon. With regard to the objection, that this country might be made to depend on foreign countries for the supply of food, I do not, when I consider the general state and condition of our relations for the supply of the commodity of food—I do not see in that objection anything which can cause me long to hesitate in any course which, on other grounds, I may think it desirable to adopt. It has been supposed that some vast confederacy of foreign nations might be formed against us, which, at some critical moment, might reduce this country to a state of utter dependence on them:—I do not think the establishment of this general confederacy at all likely. I do not think that such a general raising of bucklers against this country is a danger which ought to enter seriously into our calculation. History teaches me another lesson, when I look back at the situation of this country standing alone against the world in arms. Was England then altogether independent of foreign nations for her supply of food ? I think that history will tell us that in the plenitude of Napoleon's power, when he was connected with Austria by marriage, when his influence prevailed in Prussia, when the dreadful example of his victories was hanging over the Northern Powers, and when Europe was at his command, the iron frame of his continental system still yielded to the strenuous and irresistible pressure of mutual wants. I take, as an illustration, what occurred in 1810. Then there was scarcity, or apprehension of

scarcity; and in 1810 our importation of corn from foreign countries was 1,292,000 quarters, of which not less than 581,000 quarters came from France and Flanders; and the men whom Napoleon had raised to the rank of marshals in his successful army were among the parties who ventured on this operation of supplying us with corn. From a passage, too, which I lately read in *Napier's History of the Peninsular War*, I find that when the Duke of Wellington planted the English standard for the first time for many centuries on French ground—a circumstance one would think likely to raise the resentment of the French against the invaders of their soil—yet at Bayonne some of the French merchant vessels offered their services to the Duke of Wellington for the express purpose of victualling the invading army. That some sacrifices may be necessary in making such changes in legislation as would follow the adoption of the principles I advocate, I wish I could deny or dispute; but you must pay some penalty for having maintained and persevered so long in an erroneous system. But I am consoled by the feeling that there never has been a period in the history of this country, and I doubt whether one such will ever again occur, in which from temporary causes you would find so many opportunities of absorbing the temporary and local superfluity of labour by the means of the great public works in progress in this country at present. If I look, again, to the extension of our foreign relations, there has seldom been a period which presents, in my opinion, a better prospect of largely extending our intercourse with foreign countries, promoting thereby peace and good-will, and preventing the effects of mutual animosities between this and other countries. The progress of these great public works in this country will, no doubt, be, in the first instance, beneficial to the labouring population, whose interests and welfare it is our duty to watch over; but I believe that there is no class in the community who will reap greater advantages from a just and proper settlement of this agitated question than that higher class of manufacturers who bear the name of the landed interest. Whatever may be the circumstances attending the process of the settlement — whatever the throes which may accompany this adjustment—their remuneration may be ample by the removal of a state of intestine dissension, which I cannot contemplate without apprehension. This brings me to a part of my subject which it is difficult for me to approach without, perhaps, under the peculiar circumstances, incurring the suspicion of being influenced by personal considerations. This reason alone would be sufficient to induce me to refrain from originating in this House any topic which could generate any angry discussion on the present occasion. Fortunately, it is not necessary for me to do so; but I may assume, for argument's sake, that there have been proceedings in this country as dangerous and as unconstitutional as the warmest advocates of protection could imagine. Then, I ask, what have you to expect from counter-irritation at such proceedings, with all the instruments and improvements which ingenuity and experience can suggest? A war of bribery and chicanery—a war of the Roses in the reign of Victoria, which, in my opinion, could but terminate in one way, but which, when terminated, would leave this country torn by intestine divisions, and so exhausted as to attract the notice of foreign nations and the enemies of our common country to the spectacle of that exhaustion. These, in my opinion, are reflections well worthy the attention of Parliament and this House; and I am glad to believe that you will give them that full, deliberate, and dispassionate consideration which is not in the nature of things to be hoped for elsewhere. I believe that elsewhere these questions have been discussed too long in a spirit which makes it difficult to eliminate the truth from the passion and prejudice which surround it. My apprehensions are not confined to the fate of those who, I believe, would be the more immediate sufferers from the continuance of the contests I allude to—the landed interest—but I look further. If I could regard with any unbecoming feeling the great body of manufacturers in this country, by many of whom I am surrounded, and for the value of whose opinion I have never betrayed indifference—if I could consider that the men were unfit for a share in the administration of the Government of this country who exhibit great industry, sagacity, and intelligence—if such were my feelings towards the manufacturers, I could wish them no more fatal gift than the monopoly of power in the State by questionable means—by some revolutionary, however bloodless a convulsion, and by weapons likely to be used in the contest I now contemplate. I see special danger to them, though it is not unlikely that danger

would affect other classes. There is something tenacious of life and enduring in land. The storms of popular commotion may sweep over our ancient landmarks, and the tide of popular convulsion may submerge them for a season; but the waters will retire—

> "Mountain waves from wasted lands,
> Sweep back to ocean brine,"

and the old limits and landmarks will reappear, and the fertility of prosperous seasons replace the ravages of disastrous years. I doubt whether it would be so with your abodes of peaceful industry. There is a difference between your machinery and that which comes fresh from the hands of the great Creator of the universe. The latter is less destructible. The trade of agitation is no mystery of difficult acquirement. I can imagine no better pupil in that school than some man of liberal education, of ruined means, and no principle, who, goaded by a sense, real or imaginary, of wrongs, and the recollection of fallen fortunes, might be led to become a leader of agitation in the manufacturing districts.

> "Exoriare ali quis nostris ex ossibus ultor."

Such a man, with opportunity, might make those chimneys and storied edifices, which I hope may long endure in the manufacturing districts, tremble to their bases. I dread such a system of agitation, which I think may exist if Parliament does not interfere to make a satisfactory, just, and final settlement of this question. There are dark spots and weak places in various parts of our social system: let us not be blind to them, or neglect the duty of exposing them, with the view of mending and improving them. Let us not fling in one another's teeth difficulties, remedial or irremedial, for the sole purpose of party or of faction. Let us not fling in the face of one class a Wiltshire labourer; or a manufacturing labourer in the face of another. To meet the cases of both—to give them, in the first instance, food—to give them other luxuries which many of them still need—air, water, drainage—to give them all the physical and moral advantages possible; let that be our employment and our duty, and let us endeavour to perform that office by ridding the country of those subjects of angry discussion to which I have referred. With this explanation I express my concurrence in the statement contained in Her Majesty's Speech; and, in performing my task, I fear I have transgressed too far on your patience. The remaining topics of the Speech are not such as I believe will involve any serious differences of opinion in this House; and I think that I shall now best evince my sense of the indulgence and forbearance of the House, by proceeding to move the Address in answer to Her Majesty's Speech. The noble Lord concluded by moving—

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, to acknowledge Her Majesty's most gracious Speech from the Throne, and to thank Her Majesty for Her Majesty's condescension in assuring us that it gives Her Majesty great satisfaction again to meet us in Parliament, and to have the opportunity of recurring to our assistance and advice:

To assure Her Majesty that we learn with great satisfaction that Her Majesty continues to receive from Her Majesty's Allies, and from other Foreign Powers, the strongest assurances of their desire to cultivate the most friendly relations with this country:

That we rejoice to be informed that, in concert with the Emperor of Russia; and through the success of joint mediation, Her Majesty has been enabled to adjust the differences which had long prevailed between the Ottoman Porte and the King of Persia, and had seriously endangered the tranquillity of the East:

Humbly to thank Her Majesty for informing us that inasmuch as for several years a desolating and sanguinary warfare has afflicted the States of Rio de la Plata, during which the commerce of all nations has been interrupted, and acts of barbarity have been committed unknown to the practice of a civilized people, Her Majesty, in conjunction with the King of the French, is endeavouring to effect the pacification of those States:

To thank Her Majesty for informing us that the Convention concluded with France in the course of last year, for the more effectual suppression of the Slave Trade, is about to be carried into immediate execution, by the active co-operation of the two Powers upon the Coast of Africa; and to assure Her Majesty that we cordially unite in Her Majesty's desire, that the present union and the good understanding which so happily exists between the two Countries, may always be employed to promote the interests of humanity, and to secure the peace of the world:

That we participate in the regret expressed by Her Majesty, that the conflicting claims of Great Britain and the United States in respect to the

Territory on the North-West Coast of America, although they have been made the subject of repeated negotiation, still remain unsettled; and that we gratefully acknowledge Her Majesty's assurance, that no effort, consistent with national honour, shall be wanting on the part of Her Majesty to bring this question to an early and peaceful termination.

To thank Her Majesty for having directed the Estimates for the year to be laid before us at an early period, and for informing us that, although Her Majesty is deeply sensible of the importance of enforcing economy in all branches of the Expenditure, yet that Her Majesty has been compelled by a due regard to the exigencies of the Public Service, and to the state of the Naval and Military establishments, to propose some increase in the Estimates which provide for their efficiency:

Humbly to assure Her Majesty, that with Her Majesty we have deeply regretted to observe the very frequent instances in which the crime of deliberate assassination has been of late committed in Ireland, and that we will not fail to consider whether any measures can be devised, calculated to give increased protection to life, and to bring to justice the perpetrators of so dreadful a crime:

That we lament to learn from Her Majesty, that, in consequence of the failure of the Potato Crop in several parts of the United Kingdom, there will be a deficient supply of an article of food which forms the chief subsistence of great numbers of the people; the disease by which the plant has been affected having prevailed to the greatest extent in Ireland:

Humbly to thank Her Majesty for having adopted all such precautions as it was in Her Majesty's power to adopt for the purpose of alleviating the sufferings which may be caused by this calamity; and to assure Her Majesty, that Her Majesty may confidently rely on our co-operation in devising such other means for effecting the same benevolent purpose as may require the sanction of the Legislature:

To express our acknowledgments to Her Majesty for informing us, that Her Majesty has had great satisfaction in giving Her Majesty's assent to the measures which have been presented to Her Majesty from time to time, calculated to extend commerce and to stimulate domestic skill and industry by the repeal of prohibitory and the relaxation of protective Duties; and for Her Majesty's gracious intimation that the prosperous state of the Revenue, the increased demand for labour, and the general improvement which has taken place in the internal condition of the country, are strong testimonies in favour of the course we have pursued:

To assure Her Majesty, that, in compliance with Her Majesty's recommendation, we will take into our early consideration whether the principles on which we have acted may not, with advantage, be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in our power, after a careful review of the existing Duties upon many articles, the produce or manufacture of other Countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which Her Majesty has adverted, and, by enlarging our commercial intercourse, to strengthen the bonds of amity with Foreign Powers; and that Her Majesty may rely on our desire that any measures which we may adopt for effecting these great objects may be accompanied by such precautions as shall prevent permanent loss to the Revenue, or injurious results to any of the great Interests of the Country:

Humbly to thank Her Majesty for the gracious expression of Her full reliance on our just and dispassionate consideration of matters so deeply affecting the public welfare:

To express our cordial concurrence in Her Majesty's earnest prayer that, with the blessing of Divine Providence on our Counsels, we may be enabled to promote friendly feelings between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects, to provide additional security for the continuance of Peace, and to maintain contentment and happiness at home, by increasing the comforts and bettering the condition of the great body of the people.

The Address having been read from the Chair,

MR. E. BECKETT DENISON said: Sir, I hope the House will not think me guilty of great presumption in rising to second the Address which has just been moved. The only apology which I have to offer for occupying so prominent a position is, that in consequence of the decease of a most highly respected nobleman, the late Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding, I am at this moment the single county representative of the largest constituency in the kingdom—a constituency arising out of a population of about 1,500,000 people, the chief portion of whom are occupied in agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing pursuits of almost every description and variety. They are, beyond all doubt, waiting with more than ordinary anxiety for Her Majesty's Speech from Her Throne to Her as-

sembled Parliament; perhaps I should be justified in stating, that they are waiting with still greater anxiety for the statement of Her Majesty's Ministers as to the measures they intend to propose for the purpose of supporting and advancing the present prosperity of the kingdom, and the future development of its immense resources. Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to inform us that she receives from all Foreign Powers the most firm assurances of friendship towards Her and Her dependencies. With respect to what Her Majesty has stated in relation to the conduct of the Emperor of Russia and the King of the French, I must say that I think this kingdom is under great obligations to those Sovereigns for the part which they have taken in endeavouring to preserve the peace of the world, and to settle disputes which have occurred between other nations. What, I may ask, would be so likely to arrest the prosperity and injure the welfare of this nation as a bloody and expensive war? The King of the French has been also graciously pleased to enter into an alliance with Her Majesty for the purpose of suppressing, effectually, as I hope, the foreign Slave Trade. Her Majesty has informed us, that she receives from other Powers the strongest assurances of friendship and cordiality. Notwithstanding these assurances, a common observer must perceive that there is some danger of this cordiality being interrupted by what is passing in the western hemisphere; I trust that no effort will be left unattempted on the part of Her Majesty's Government to prevent any breach with America, for no doubt the world would suffer by any unfortunate occurrence which might lead to war; but in my humble opinion (and I have no doubt it must be the opinion of this House), it is the duty of the Government, while making every effort to prevent any breach of friendship or good will in our western relations, not to permit any wilful and authorized trespass to be committed upon the privileges or the territories of Her Majesty's subjects. Following up that view of the subject, I must add, that I think Her Majesty is perfectly justified in asking this House to grant Her Majesty additional resources for the purpose of putting both the Army and Navy into a more efficient state than they have been in for some time past. God grant that we may not be called upon to exert the energies which I have no doubt, in case of necessity, this country would be ready to put forth, in case of any infraction of its rights! Her Majesty has alluded also to the state of Ireland—I might say, unhappy Ireland; for it really seems that, within the last few months, it has been threatened both with famine and murder. The danger of famine, I hope, was overrated; but the cases of murder, which certainly seems, from the returns we receive, to walk unpunished in broad mid-day, do, in my humble judgment, call upon the Government to endeavour to devise some means by which such a frightful state of things shall be arrested; and I do hope they will be able to propose measures which may have the effect of preventing such shameful and unheard-of miseries and misfortunes. Perhaps the most interesting topic to which Her Majesty has alluded is in the latter part of Her Speech, with respect to the relaxation of duties upon foreign commodities. We have now had four years' experience of the abilities of the present Prime Minister, and of his views of commercial policy; and I think the House will admit that he has been, upon the whole, most eminently successful. I believe I am correct in stating, that in the last four years, the reductions in the duties payable to the Customs and Excise have been made to the extent of between 4,000,000*l.* and 5,000,000*l.*; and that those reductions have been very nearly made up by the duties paid upon the increased quantity of goods imported into and consumed in this kingdom. Now, we hear of "great facts;" but to my mind this is one of the most astounding facts I ever heard of. I must confess that it holds out the greatest possible encouragement to pursue the same course of reduction of duties upon goods to be imported from foreign parts; and I am bound to say, that I think they who have had the wisdom to devise, and the courage to propose such reductions, are eminently entitled to the thanks of the public. Her Majesty has been pleased to advise that we should pursue that system, and follow it up still further. I am quite of opinion—experience drives me to it—[*laughter*]—Gentlemen on the opposite side seem to be amused at my using the word "drive," but I should be ashamed of myself if I did not candidly confess that experience teaches me that that course is the right one. But then I say, with all respect for Gentlemen who have been the strong advocates of that system, that I think it ought to be pur-

sued with the greatest possible caution, and that no one class or interest should be so affected that it may be ruined for the benefit of others; but that the whole scheme should be so well digested, and the proposed reductions so mutually balanced, that all parties should have an opportunity of participating in the benefits to be derived from them. Entertaining these opinions, I beg to say, in my own defence, that as to what measures are to be proposed, I know nothing. I have asked for no information; I want none in order to induce me to second the Address to Her Majesty. I have perfect confidence in Her Majesty's Government, that they will propose such measures only as will deal out justice to all parties, and, I hope, liberality to all at the same time. I think that confidence should be extended to them until they state their measures to this House. I shall certainly feel perfectly at liberty to vote for or against any measure they may propose when that time arrives; but at present I want no information to induce me to support with perfect cordiality the Address to the Throne, feeling confident that the Government of the day has advised Her Majesty to recommend measures to our consideration which will advance the prosperity and welfare of this kingdom. In the name, therefore, of the great community I have the honour to represent, I ask the House, with all respect, to support the Address which has been moved; and if the measures which it recommends be carefully devised and well followed up, I do believe that, as in the last three or four years, trade will improve, employment will be regular, crime will diminish, and the welfare and prosperity of this nation will be advanced. I know of no limits that can be put to the development of the energies of the United Kingdom. I ask, then, on behalf of the great community I represent, that they may have every facility for regular employment and the increase of their comforts. They are, in my humble opinion—and I know them well—the most hard-working, patient, and loyal people upon the face of the earth; they are, if properly instructed when young, a truly religious people; and they entertain for Her Majesty that high respect, and love, and veneration, which Her Majesty so richly deserves. Sir, I beg to second the Address which has been proposed by the noble Lord the Member for South Lancashire.

Sir R. PEEL: Sir, I would fain hope, that although the course which I take is an unusual one, yet that I am acting in conformity with the general wish of the House, in availing myself of the very earliest opportunity of giving that explanation which at no remote period the House will require from me. I would fain hope that I am not obstructing the course of this discussion upon the Address by giving that explanation at this period. But, if no consideration of public advantage could justify me in taking this course, I am sure the generous feelings of the House will deem it only natural that I should desire that not a moment should elapse before I explain to the House the motives by which I have been actuated, and the principles which have governed my conduct. I may feel hurt at having been the object of much accusation upon vague surmise; I may think it unjust to have been condemned without a hearing—I say nothing upon that head; if any momentary feelings of indignation were aroused, the recollection of great indulgence and of great confidence, was quite sufficient to efface those temporary feelings. I shall make no allusion, therefore, to particular expressions, or particular accusations; but this I do ask, even while I do not require the reversal of the sentence; I ask for the opportunity, after condemnation, of explaining the motives of my conduct. I ask you to listen at least with patience and indulgence to those facts and that evidence which I shall this night adduce, and which will form the materials on which other tribunals, judging under less excitement, will ultimately pronounce upon the motives and the conduct of men charged with deep responsibility in critical times. I wish to explain what were the grounds which led me and those with whom I acted humbly to tender to a gracious Sovereign the resignation of the trust which was committed to us. I wish also to explain what were the circumstances under which that trust was reassumed, and under which I now appear in the House as the Minister of the Crown. Sir, the immediate cause which led to the dissolution of the Government in the early part of last December, was that great and mysterious calamity which caused a lamentable failure in an article of food on which great numbers of the people in this part of the United Kingdom, and still larger numbers in the sister kingdom, depend mainly for their subsistence. That was the immediate and proximate cause, which led to the dissolution of the Govern-

ment. But it would be unfair and uncandid on my part, if I attached undue importance to that particular cause. It certainly appeared to me to preclude further delay, and to require immediate decision—decision not only upon the measures which it was necessary at the time to adopt, but also as to the course to be ultimately taken with regard to the laws which govern the importation of grain. I will not assign to that cause too much weight. I will not withhold the homage which is due to the progress of reason and to truth, by denying that my opinions on the subject of protection have undergone a change. Whether holding a private station, or placed in a public one, I will assert the privilege of yielding to the force of argument and conviction, and acting upon the results of enlarged experience. It may be supposed that there is something humiliating in making such admissions; Sir, I feel no such humiliation. I have not so much confidence in the capacity of man, to determine what is right or wrong intuitively, as to make me feel abashed at admitting that I have been in error. I should feel humiliation, if, having modified or changed my opinions, I declined to acknowledge the change for fear of incurring the imputation of inconsistency. The question is whether the facts are sufficient to account for the change, and the motives for it are pure and disinterested. Nothing could be more base on the part of a public man than to protect himself from danger by pretending a change of opinion; or more inconsistent with the duty he owes to his Sovereign and country than if, seeing reason to alter his course, he forebore to make the alteration by the fear of being taunted with a charge of inconsistency. The real question, as I have said, is, whether the motives for the modification of opinion are sufficient and sincere. Sir, those who contend for the removal of impediments upon the import of a great article of subsistence, such as corn, start with an immense advantage in the argument. The natural presumption is in favour of free and unrestricted importation. It may, indeed, be possible to combat that presumption; it may be possible to meet its advocates in the field of argument, by showing that there are other and greater advantages arising out of the system of prohibition than out of the system of unrestricted intercourse; but even those who so contend will, I think, admit that the natural feelings of mankind are strongly in favour of the absence of all restriction, and that the presumption is so strong, that we must combat it by an avowal of some great public danger to be avoided, or some great public benefit to be obtained by restriction on the importation of food. We all admit that the argument in favour of high protection or prohibition on the ground that it is for the benefit of a particular class, is untenable. The most strenuous advocates for protection have abandoned that argument; they rest, and wisely rest, the defence of protective duties upon higher principles. They have alleged, as I have myself alleged, that there were public reasons for retaining this protection. Sir, circumstances made it absolutely necessary for me, occupying the public station I do, and seeing the duty that must unavoidably devolve on me—it became absolutely necessary for me maturely to consider whether the grounds on which an alteration of the Corn Laws can be resisted are tenable. The arguments in favour of protection must be based either on the principle that protection to domestic industry is in itself sound policy, and that, therefore, agriculture, being a branch of domestic industry, is entitled to share in that protection; or, that in a country like ours, encumbered with an enormous load of debt, and subject to great taxation, it is necessary that domestic industry should be protected from competition with foreigners; or, again—the interests of the great body of the community, the laborious classes, being committed in this question—that the rate of wages varies with the price of provisions, that high prices implies high wages, and that low wages are the concomitants of low prices. Further, it may be said, that the land is entitled to protection on account of some peculiar burdens which it bears. But that is a question of justice rather than of policy; I have always felt and maintained that the land is subject to peculiar burdens; but you have the power of weakening the force of that argument by the removal of the burden, or making compensation. The first three objections to the removal of protection are objections founded on considerations of public policy. The last is a question of justice, which may be determined by giving some counterbalancing advantage. Now, I want not to deprive those who, arguing *à priori*, without the benefit of experience, have come to the conclusion that protection is objectionable in principle—I want not to deprive them of any of the credit which is fairly their due. Reason, unaided by experience, brought

conviction to their minds. My opinions have been modified by the experience of the last three years. I have had the means and opportunity of comparing the results of periods of abundance and low prices with periods of scarcity and high prices. I have carefully watched the effects of the one system, and of the other—first, of the policy we have been steadily pursuing for some years, viz., the removal of protection from domestic industry; and next, of the policy which the friends of protection recommend. I have also had an opportunity of marking from day to day the effect upon great social interests of freedom of trade and comparative abundance. I have not failed to note the results of preceding years, and to contrast them with the results of the last three years; and I am led to the conclusion that the main grounds of public policy on which protection has been defended are not tenable; at least I cannot maintain them. I do not believe, after the experience of the last three years, that the rate of wages varies with the price of food. I do not believe, that with high prices, wages will necessarily rise in the same ratio. I do not believe that a low price of food necessarily implies a low rate of wages. Neither can I maintain that protection to domestic industry is necessarily good. I said last year on the Motion of the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) that I thought protective duties were evils in themselves. But I also said, that as they had grown with our system, and not being incompatible with a high degree of prosperity, I thought they ought not to be lightly abolished, and must be tenderly and cautiously dealt with. It is now, however, impossible for us, after we see the results of the change in the Tariff during the last four years, to contend that protection to industry is in itself, and abstractedly, a public good. Then, as to the other argument, which I confess made a great impression on me in the first instance, and which is sanctioned by great authority—that because we have a heavy debt and a high rate of taxation, we must be protected from competition with foreign industry—that argument has also been submitted to the test of the last three years, and, so far as the experience of that period can supply an argument, it is this—that a large debt and heavy taxation are best encountered by abundance and cheapness of provisions; which rather alleviate than add to the weight of the burden. Let us take the result of that experience of constantly diminished protection—on wages—on trade, and on revenue. First, as to wages. Who can deny the fact that during the three years that preceded the month of October last, prices were comparatively low? there was comparative cheapness and plenty, and yet at no period were the wages of labour higher. If you take the three preceding years, you will find high prices, and coexistent with high prices you will find low wages. Well, then, I have six years experience; I have during the first three years high prices and low wages; I have during the last three years low prices and high wages; and I cannot resist the conclusion that wages do not vary with the price of provisions. They do vary with the increase of capital, with the prosperity of the country, with the increased power to employ labour; but there is no immediate relation between wages and provisions—or if there be a relation, it is an inverse ratio. Now as to the Tariff; as I said before during the last four or five years we have been acting on the admitted principle of removing prohibitions—reducing duties, or abating, and in some cases destroying protection to native industry. That has been the principle, whether right or wrong, on which we have acted—the removal of protection to native industry. Now, what has been the result? I will give you the total amount of exports since the year 1839. The total value of British produce and manufactures exported from the United Kingdom was, in 1839, 53,000,000*l.*; in 1840, 51,000,000*l.*; in 1841, 51,000,000*l.*; in 1842, 47,000,000*l.*; in 1843, 52,000,000*l.*; in 1844, 58,000,000*l.*; that is, the rise from the year when the great invasion upon the protection of domestic industry was made by Parliament was from 47,381,000*l.* in 1842, to 58,500,000*l.* in 1844. But it may be said the China trade made all the difference. Now let us deduct the whole of that trade. In 1842, our exports to all the countries, except China, amounted to 46,411,000*l.*; and in 1844, they increased by 10,000,000*l.*, amounting to 56,000,000*l.* For the last year we can only have the account for eleven months preceding December. In 1843, the exports of our principal articles of manufacture to all parts of the world, including China, amounted to 41,011,000*l.*; in 1844, to 47,312,000*l.*, and, during the first eleven months of 1845, to 47,764,000*l.* Such is the state of our foreign exports under this system of continued removal of protection. Now let me take the returns of the revenue

as bearing on this question—ought there to be high protection in a country encumbered with an immense public debt and heavy taxation? In 1842, I proposed a reduction in the Customs to an estimated amount of 1,438,000*l.*; in 1844, I proposed a further reduction in the Customs' duties to the amount of 273,000*l.*; in 1845, to the large amount of 2,418,000*l.* I estimated the total loss from these several reductions at 4,129,000*l.*, and let it be remembered that I discarded altogether the revenue from corn. How have these calculations been verified? Have 4,000,000*l.* been lost? No. The total amount of the loss has been 1,500,000*l.* I dealt with the Excise last year, and made a reduction of a million of Excise duties; the whole of the glass duties, the whole of the auction duty was taken off; the loss on that occasion was estimated at 1,000,000*l.* Observe, that was not a mere reduction of duties; there was no expectation, therefore, that increased consumption would make up for a diminished rate of taxation, for these duties were totally abolished. I felt confident, that although the glass and auction duties were abolished, still by vivifying other branches of industry, the revenue would derive some compensation. What will be the fact on the 5th of April? I believe, that notwithstanding the total reduction, the absolute loss of a million, my firm belief is, that the revenue from the Excise will this year be greater than ever. Notwithstanding these reductions there has been a salient spring of prosperity which has supplied the void you caused by the remission of taxation. Well, then, with that evidence before me, could I contend that on account of high taxation or great debt you must necessarily continue high protective duties? I have shown you that my estimates as to a loss in the Customs have been already falsified; that the Customs this year amount to nearly 20,000,000*l.*; that, comparing the Customs' revenue of 1845 with the Customs' revenue of 1842, after that diminution of taxation to the extent of 4,000,000*l.*, the Customs of this year, excluding from both years the revenue from foreign corn, are better by 100,000*l.* than in the former year. But I will now refer to more important considerations than those either of trade or revenue; I will take the state of crime in the country. My right hon. Friend, at the head of the Home Department, stated last year that reductions had taken place in the number of commitments, and in the crimes committed. In the year 1842 there was an increase of crime and commitments; in 1843, there was a turn, and a decrease began; and the decrease in the commitments remarkable in 1843 and 1844 continued in 1845. The total number of commitments in 1845 was 24,350, that is, 2,237 less than in the highest preceding year, 1842. In 1843, there was a decrease of 5⅛ per cent. on the preceding year; in 1844, a further decrease of 10 3-10 per cent.; and in 1845, a decrease of 5½ per cent., and all this in an increasing population. This decrease of crime in the last year has taken place in all the chief manufacturing districts; and not only in all the chief manufacturing districts, but, with the exception of five, there has been a corresponding and almost equal decrease in all the chief agricultural districts. What is the state of Wales? In Wales the decrease of commitments is more remarkable than in almost any other part of the kingdom. So much for actual crime. With repect to crimes connected with sedition, discontent, and disaffection to the Government, —in the last two years the office of the Attorney General, I may say, has been a sinecure. There has been only a single prosecution for an offence of this nature during the whole of the last year. Government takes no credit for lenity; there has been no prosecution, because the crime of sedition did not exist. In 1840-1-2-3—listen to this, and seriously consider it—there were 1,257 persons committed on charges of seditious and riotous offences. In 1843-4-5, only 124 persons were committed so charged, instead of 1,257; while, in the last year, I believe there was not one. In 1845, there were 422 persons sentenced to transportation less than in 1842. In the last three years there were 1,701 persons sentenced to transportation less than in the three preceding years. This has been during a period of comparative abundance, and low prices. Is it possible to resist the inference that employment, low prices, comparative abundance, contribute to the diminution of crime? Now, these are great social advantages; I will not say they have been promoted by—I say only they have been concurrent with, the diminution of protection to domestic industry—concurrent with comparative abundance. Well, have these advantages been purchased by any serious detriment to that great interest whose welfare ought to be one of the first objects of our concern—the agricultural interest?

Protection has been diminished. I have been the object of repeated accusation and attack, for diminishing it; and deeply should I regret if those great social advantages to which I have referred had been accompanied, in consequence of that diminution of protection, with any serious injury to agriculture. Let us take the four great articles, in respect of which there has been a diminution of protection. Foreign flax has, for many years, been admitted at a very low duty into this country. What duty remained, we remitted last year. There is now, therefore, a perfectly unrestricted import of foreign flax. In 1824, the duty on flax was 10*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.* per ton. It is now absolutely nothing. The reduction having taken place, what was the effect on the price of flax? The price of fine flax in Belfast market in 1843, was 65*s.* to 70*s.*; in 1844, it was 63*s.* to 68*s.*; in 1845, from 65*s.* to 68*s.*; and in January, 1846, the present month, the price of Irish flax, fine Irish flax, in the Belfast market, was from 70*s.* to 80*s.* There was no reduction when made that caused so much alarm, and by the alarm did injury at first, and which it was prophesied would do so much injury, as the removal of the absolute prohibition on the importation of foreign cattle. The permission to import, at a very low rate, foreign cattle, foreign sheep, and foreign swine, was accompanied with many predictions—predictions that serious loss and injury would be inflicted on the agricultural interest—and it was said that we should deeply regret the day those changes were made, and the panic that would arise. Now, has serious injury been sustained by that reduction? There was before that absolute prohibition, and there is now the admission of foreign cattle at a very low rate; and I must, on this question, first of all, admit that there has been a gradual increase in the importation. I want, at the same time, to show that concurrently with increase in importation, there has been increase in the price of the articles. In 1844, there were imported 2,800 oxen and cows, and in the eleven months of the year 1845, ending with November, there were not less than 15,000 imported, showing a very great increase. Have prices in this country been affected either in a corresponding degree, or in any, by this large importation? In 1844, the contract price for the victualling stores in the navy for salt beef, was 3*l.* 18*s.* 2*d.*; the contract price entered into for the navy, in December, 1845, was, I regret to say, 6*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.* The salt pork that was contracted for in 1844, was 3*l.* 15*s.* 10*d.* a tierce; and in 1845, it was 6*l.* 12*s.* The contract price for fresh beef for the navy, in 1844, was 1*l.* 14*s.* 9*d.*; the contract price in 1845, was 2*l.* 2*s.* 2*d.* Now, all this increase in price, was concurrent with increased importation; one prophecy, if I recollect rightly, was, that there would be an importation into this country of 3,500,000 pigs, and that the price of salt pork would be immensely reduced; but look at the price of salt pork rising from 3*l.* 15*s.* 10*d.* to 6*l.* 12*s.* 4*d.*, and I think about 4,000 swine have been imported. There was no article last year that caused so much alarm as lard. The duty was then taken off. In 1840, there were 97 cwt. of foreign lard imported into this country. In 1842, the duty was reduced from 8*s.* to 2*s.* a cwt. and there were then imported 48,312 cwt.; in 1844, 76,000 cwt. were imported; and in 1845, the importation had reached above 80,000 cwt. And what has been the price of domestic lard at Belfast during that period? In 1844, it was 48*s.* a cwt.; in 1845, it was 67*s.*; and in January of the present year, notwithstanding the increase caused by this importation, the price has risen from 48*s.* in 1844, to 62*s.* There is only one other article of great importance which has been seriously affected by the reduction to which I shall recur, and that is the article of wool. We proposed in 1844 that the duty upon foreign wool should be altogether annihilated—that there should be no duty. It was certainly more in deputations than in this House that any objection was strenuously urged to the reduction; but certainly there were anticipations of great loss to the wool-grower from the reduction of the duty on foreign wool. Here again there has been an enormous increase in the imports. In 1842, there were 45,880,000 lbs. of foreign wool brought into this market; in 1844, 65,790,000 lbs.; and in ten months of the last year I am bound to admit there has been no less than 65,216,000 lbs. of foreign wool brought in, in consequence of the reduction of the duty. Now, what has been the reduction in the price? In 1842, the price of Southdown wool, when there was a duty upon foreign, was 11*d.*, of long wool 10*d.*; in 1843 the price of Southdown was 11½*d.*, of long wool 11*d.*; in 1844 the price of Southdown was 1*s.* 2*d.*, and of long wool 1*s.* 2*d.* also. In December, 1845, eighteen

months after the total reduction of the duty, the price of Southdown wool rose from 11*d.*, the price in 1842, to 1*s.* 4½*d.* The average price in December, 1845, of Southdown, was 1*s.* 4*d.*, and of long wool 1*s.* 2*d.* Such have been the effects of this reduction, made in 1842, so far as domestic agriculture is concerned. I think, as far as we have had experience within the last four years, I have shown that, by the removal of protection, domestic industry and the great social interests of the country have been promoted; crime has diminished, and morality has improved. I can bring the most conclusive proof that the public health has been improved, yet the national trade has been extending, our exports have increased; and this—and I rejoice in it—has been effected, not only without serious injury to those interests from which protection was withdrawn, but I think I have shown that it has been concurrent with an increase in the prices of those articles. Now, it is right I should state, that notwithstanding the conviction which this experience has brought home to my mind, yet my decided impression was, that on other grounds the charge of considering the change in the present Corn Law ought not to have devolved upon me. This I was firmly resolved upon, that I could not this Session, on the Motion of the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Villiers), for the consideration of the Corn Laws—I could not, with these convictions, which, say as you will, I cannot withstand, have met that Motion with a direct negative. Now, Sir, let me again repeat that I claim no credit whatever for having drawn my conclusions from abstract reasoning. My conviction has been brought about by observation and experience; and I could not, with this conviction, have undertaken the defence of the Corn Laws, either upon the public ground that this country being highly taxed the continuance of protection was necessary, or upon the ground that it was for the interest of the labouring classes that high prices should continue as a guarantee of high wages; and I could not have undertaken it upon the ground that the removing protection from domestic industry must necessarily paralyse commerce, lower prices, and undermine our national prosperity. But this I wish most ardently—I wish to have the opportunity of frankly stating to those Gentlemen who have honoured me upon so many occasions with their confidence, that I can continue this contest no longer—that they must devolve the duty of maintaining protection upon other persons, who can adduce better arguments in its favour than I can. I doubted whether it would not have been advantageous if, in another Parliament, this question should have been considered; but it would have been my bounden duty to have committed the defence, if a defence were undertaken, of protection to other hands more able to maintain the conflict. I should have wished, I say, that another Parliament should have had an opportunity of considering this question; but there did occur, during the course of the last autumn, that which precluded me from taking the course which would have been most agreeable to my personal feelings. A great calamity befell us, the limits of which it was difficult to divine, the consequences of which, though felt, it may still be difficult to describe. There occurred a great visitation of Providence, extending not to Ireland only, but Great Britain, America, and many parts of the world; and we, Her Majesty's servants, constituting the Government of this country, were called upon to consider what should be done to lessen the calamity? There appeared to be a great and a pressing danger, and it was our duty towards our Sovereign and towards the country to meet that danger. If it was advisable, from the pressure of the deficiency to take immediate measures, it would have been impossible, with our conviction of the necessity, to abstain; with our convictions, we could not, consistently with the duty we owed to the Sovereign and the country. If we had, indeed, pretended apprehensions of a scarcity for the purpose of effecting an alteration in the Corn Laws, nothing could have been more base or dishonest than to have taken such a step; but you shall have the opportunity of judging of the motives upon which I and others have acted, and you shall determine whether or no, with the information we were in possession of, we were not justified in drawing the conclusion that it was impossible to maintain the existing commercial system. My own opinion was founded upon the evidence which I shall now adduce; and it was impossible, upon that evidence, to come to any other opinion. The advice which I individually offered at an early period—so early as in the month of November, was to meet this emergency by a suspension of the import duties on foreign corn. I came to that conclusion; and I was adduced to advise that unusual—not unprecedented, but I admit unusual—

course, upon the following considerations. I will proceed first to an explanation of the circumstances under which, early in December, the Government was temporarily dissolved, and under which the Government, as now constituted, resumed office. There are two important periods in giving that explanation, to which I must draw attention—first, the period which elapsed between the 1st of November, 1845, and the 6th of November; and, second, the period which elapsed between the 25th of November and the 6th of December. I propose to read consecutively the information that was received from different parts of this country and the Continent which appeared to me to justify the conclusion to which I came, both in the early part of November, and towards the close of that month and the beginning of the following month. I will give the date of each letter that I shall quote; but, of course, the letters which were received subsequently to the 6th November, can form no justification of the advice; but though I shall give the date of each letter, I will not divide the evidence into two periods, but I will give the whole of it consecutively. The disease which affected the potato crop in this country was also felt in other parts of the world; and there were in other parts of Europe apprehensions of scarcity. For instance, the Resident Agent of the Government, writing from Poland, on the 22nd of October, said—

"The cost of articles of food is stated to be higher than it has been since 1813 and 1814. The unfavourable results of the harvests in Podolia, Lithuania, Gallicia, the German Baltic provinces, preclude the hope of foreign aid. No alleviation of the general distress is expected before next autumn."

In a letter, dated the 14th of December, Colonel Wynford, writing from Riga, says—

"The supply of rye and rye-flour sent from St. Petersburg is insufficient for the relief of the Livonians, and discontent prevails."

From Prussia we received the following. On the 10th of November the Minister of the Interior informed Lord Westmoreland that the potato disease had been observed in almost every part of the Prussian monarchy. From Belgium, dated the 24th of September, "the Chambers sanctioned the proposal of the Government to prohibit export, and permit import." Egypt, on the 22nd of October, 1845, prohibited exportation of all corn arriving at Alexandria after that day. Turkey prohibited the export of all grain from the ports of Anatolia and her Asiatic provinces from the 27th of August, 1845, to harvest time in 1846. Sweden prohibited the export of potatoes from the 15th of October until the next harvest. There was, indeed, at this period a general apprehension of scarcity of provisions extending from Sweden to Egypt, and from Riga to Turkey, and measures were taken to stop their exportation, and for excluding us from some of our usual sources of supply. With regard to England and Scotland, this is a part of the information which reached the Government. It is a letter addressed to Sir James Graham by a great salesman in London, who deals largely in the retail part of his business—the sale of potatoes. But I should first state, that the earliest account I received of the disease in the potato crop was from the Isle of Wight, where it was estimated that the crop had almost entirely failed. The gentleman to whom I have just referred wrote, on the 11th of August, as follows:—

"Being myself a large grower, some years to the extent of 300 acres, in Kent, where I farm, am also a salesman in London, and having been engaged largely in the retail part of the business, can give an opinion. I received a letter on the 1st instant from my agent at Ash, near Sandwich, stating that the crops were blighted in that neighbourhood the same as in October last year (it was then only partial in East Kent). On Tuesday last, I went down by the Dover eight o'clock train. On my arrival there, I immediately drove all round the neighbourhood of Sandwich, Ash, Wingham, and its neighbourhood, and found the whole of the crop, early and late, not excepting the cottagers' gardens, were being entirely destroyed. On my return, I could trace it by the side of the whole line to Tonbridge. Have since looked over the tops that come as covering on that article to the different markets, and find t hey are all affected. On Tuesday last, I paid a visit to my farm at Maidstone, and found it had made fearful destruction there, and returned by way of Gravesend. All were alike affected. The same evening I went to East and West Ham, in Essex. Amongst the large growers, found it was just appearing. Friday, I went to Leytonstone and neighbourhood. All are alike."

That letter, then, contained conclusive proof that, in the opinion of this gentleman, the potato crop in Kent was seriously injured. The next letter is in reference to the state of Lancashire, and was from the Rev. Mr. Clay, chaplain to the House of Correction at Preston, dated the 23rd of October:—

"It is too certain that the potato crop in this part of the country will be a serious failure. I have obtained information from the districts extending as far as Rufford and Croston on the

south, the Fylde country and Blackpool on the west, and Lancaster on the north; and from all quarters the accounts speak of great injury to the crops, though they vary as to the extent of it. My information, verbal and written, has come from scientific agriculturists, from practical farmers, and from dealers. Those among the first-named, who have paid much attention to the facts, estimate the loss, as it exists now, at more than two-fifths. But the progress of the disease is so rapid, and its presence so universal, that it is impossible to conjecture what may be the amount of the defalcation by Christmas."

Here is a letter from Mr. Wood, Chairman of the Excise, who, writing on the 2nd December from Yorkshire, thus addressed the Chancellor of the Exchequer:—

"You will regret to hear that the potato disease has now manifested itself in the most extensive manner in this district. Potatoes were selling ten days since at 2*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* a bushel of 70 lbs., in York. Yesterday, the same weight sold at 1*s.* 2*d.*, owing to the farmers bringing an extra quantity to market. I have, consequently, had several pits opened on this estate, and I fear that before Christmas we shall not have a sound one; what the poor are to live on, I cannot guess. I know you will be anxious to have accurate information, and therefore have ventured to give you this account."

From Scotland, I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for the county of Dumfries, which gave us as unfavourable an account as any I had seen from that part. Mr. Hope Johnstone, writing on the 22nd November, says—

"I am sorry to say, that in so far as my own observation has gone, the disease appears to be progressing. I have to-day examined a large quantity of potatoes grown on some of the best and dryest soils in this neighbourhood, and have not found one potato in twenty untainted, while three-fourths are quite unfit for human food. These have been carefully housed, and have never been exposed to damp since they were taken out of the ground. In Dumfries-shire also the decay is going on rapidly."

These were the accounts which reached me in the months of October and November, with respect to the extent of this disease in parts of Great Britain. Now as to the accounts from Ireland, because the pressure appeared to be the greatest in that country, the people there chiefly subsisting upon potatoes. It is difficult to estimate the numbers who subsist upon potatoes. But here is the Report made to the Government, presented by Mr. Lucas, who was Member for Monaghan, Sir R. Routh, and Professor Kane. They say that the numerical proportion of the Irish population that live exclusively upon potatoes, includes, certainly, four millions. It was, therefore, a calamity which threatened the subsistence of not less than four millions in Ireland that the Government had to provide against. Now, first I will read to the House the information which came to us from the chief authority in Ireland—the Lord Lieutenant, who remitted to us every day the principal information which he received. It was the duty of my right hon. Friend and myself to read the reports thus received, and to that duty we did devote many anxious days and nights. I will not refer to the detailed reports received in great numbers from Ireland. They were nearly all concurrent; but I will state at once the impressions of the chief authority, and the communications which he made to the Government. I will begin with the 17th October, when Lord Heytesbury writes to the Secretary of State—

"Even if the crops should turn out to be as bad as is now apprehended, it is not thought that there will be any immediate pressure in the market. There will be enough saved for immediate consumption. The evil will probably not be felt in all its intensity till towards the month of February, or the beginning of spring. I am assured that there is no stock whatever of last year's potatoes in the country."

So deep was the impression of danger made on him who was chiefly responsible for guarding against any calamity, that hardly a day passed that he did not reiterate these statements. All I ask now, after the accusations which have been brought against me, is, that I may place upon record the evidence on which I have acted. There may, perhaps, now be no danger; but if you are to judge of our motives, the real question at issue is, what were the apprehensions which responsible men were, at that time, inclined to entertain? On the 20th of October, Lord Heytesbury writes again—

"Our accounts continue to be of the most discouraging nature. They are regularly transmitted to Sir James Graham's office. One of the most embarrassing circumstances attending the disease is, that potatoes dug up to all appearance perfectly sound, after a short time begin to decay, and very soon rot altogether. Under such circumstances, it is impossible to form any decisive opinion as to the amount of the calamity."

On the 24th, he writes—

"From the accounts which reach us I should be inclined to say that the progress of the disease has, in some localities, been checked; but I dare not lay too great a stress upon this; for we constantly receive satisfactory reports of the state of the potatoes when dug, and learn, a few days after, that they have all rotted in the pits. It is this insecurity that forms our greatest difficulty. We do not know, and cannot know, the extent of the evil."

On the 27th, he says—

"We are most anxious for the result of the deliberations of the Cabinet upon the state of the potato crops in Ireland; the reports from various country gentlemen and public bodies continue to be of so alarming a nature, that it seems desirable that something should be done, if it be only to tranquillize the public mind, and diminish the panic. Everything is rising rapidly in price; and the people begin to show symptoms of discontent, which may ripen into something more. Should we be authorized in issuing a proclamation prohibiting distillation in grain? This is demanded on all sides."

On the 8th November, in answer to a letter written by my right hon. Friend, inquiring how it was, if the danger were so great, that he had replied to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, that there was no immediate apprehension, he writes again—

"It is perfectly true that I did, in my answer to the Lord Mayor, say that there was no immediate pressure in the market; but you must not give too wide a meaning to that observation, which had reference merely to his demand that the exportation of grain should be prohibited, and the ports immediately thrown open. My meaning was, that there was nothing so pressing as to require us to act without waiting for the decision of the responsible advisers of the Crown. But the danger may be upon us before we are aware of its being near; for, as I said in a former letter, the sudden decay of the potatoes dug up in an apparently sound state, sets all calculations at defiance. Some precautionary measures must be adopted, and adopted promptly; for there is danger in delay. As the digging of the potatoes advances, we see it more clearly; and I regret to say, that Professor Lindley, when he took leave of me yesterday, told me, that he doubted very much whether the potatoes would keep through the winter."

On the 11th November, the Lord Lieutenant says—

"The accounts we receive of the progress of the potato harvest from the constabulary are still very unsatisfactory; but those from the resident magistrates are rather less unfavourable."

But then mark the postscript—

"Since this letter was written, later reports have been submitted to me, in which even the resident magistrates now appear to be of opinion that the disease is extending, and the evil much greater than they had imagined it to be. The heavy rains of the last few days have done infinite mischief."

And in the last letter from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland which I shall read to you, dated November 17th, he says—

"The disease progresses apparently unchecked by any of the precautions adopted; and the ill-intentioned leave nothing undone to irritate and exasperate the people. A very bad spirit prevails in many of the provinces. If we had to deal only with a short crop, we might calculate with some degree of certainty upon the time when the pressure would be felt; but how rely upon any calculation when the potatoes are perishing in the pits? When the evil day of scarcity does come, it will probably come with fearful rapidity. We must not allow ourselves to be taken by surprise."

Such being the accounts received with reference to the state of the disease, I do hope that those who may have been disposed to blame us will be inclined to make allowance for the feelings of those whose duty it was to be watching, day by day, the progress of this calamity, to be forecasting the prospects of the future, and to be considering what were the means of precaution which ought to be adopted. You may say, this is our own official information; but reports reached us from other quarters—from gentlemen wholly unconnected with the Government—and I could produce thousands; but I will take those only to which, perhaps, the greatest importance should be attached. Here is a letter from the Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland. He says—

"I beg leave to send you an extract from a Dublin morning paper, which will give you a correct account of the measures which the Council of the Society have adopted respecting the prevailing disease in the potato crop. I beg leave also to state, that when I issued a circular, about a month since, to the secretaries of about 120 local societies, in connexion with the central one, I got several answers from persons, stating that the disease was not then apparent in their immediate neighbourhood; but I have since received letters from most of them, stating that, upon digging the crops, they found the disease in almost every quarter; and I may safely say at present, that there is not a county in Ireland, that is not, more or less, affected by it. I shall barely add, Sir, that the greatest panic appears to exist in all parts of the community; and those who know the country best, are most puzzled how to act. One thing, however, I think, is certain, that enough has already transpired to justify the most prompt and energetic measures on the part of the public and the Government."

I will now take some letters from gentlemen connected with Ireland, but still unconnected with the Government. Lord Monteagle says—

"Take it, however, at the least, I do not recollect any former example of a calamitous failure being anything near so great and so alarming as the present. Generally, we have seen the means of carrying our people forward, at least, till summer approaches, and till we were within two or three months of the new crop. The case is very different now; and, in some places, I know not how the peasantry will get through the winter in very many cases."

The Duke of Leinster presided at a meeting in Dublin, on the 31st of October, at which the following resolutions were agreed to:—

"That the committee do respectfully represent to the Lord Lieutenant, that it has now been ascertained beyond a doubt that famine, and, consequently, pestilence, are immediately imminent, unless the Government shall, without hesitation or delay, take the most prompt measures to provide for the people, and to organize means for the distribution of support in each locality throughout the land. That we respectfully call upon his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant forthwith to order the ports of Ireland to be opened for the importation of Indian corn, rice, and other articles suited for human food."

I have also a communication from Lord Clare, which contains similar expressions. On the first appearance of this disorder in the potatoes, we sent to Ireland — not trusting altogether to the reports which we had received—two gentlemen of the highest eminence, who must be known to almost every Member of this House—Dr. Linley, professor of botany, and Dr. Lyon Playfair. They were entirely unconnected with Ireland; and they were to found their opinions upon what they saw. They went to Ireland; they travelled through several counties; and when they returned, they requested that they might meet me. My right hon. Friend and I had an interview with Dr. Linley; and the result of that interview was so alarming, that we desired Dr. Linley and Dr. Playfair to leave upon record their impressions. Accordingly, they addressed a letter to us, on the 15th November, to the following effect:—

"During our stay in Ireland, we carefully examined such official papers as were transmitted to us from the Castle. We consulted persons acquainted with the facts of the disease. We visited the district lying between Dublin and Drogheda, and inspected various potato fields and stores in the counties of Dublin, Louth, Meath, Westmeath, and a part of Kildare. Judging from the evidence thus collected, and from what we have seen of the progress of the disease in England, we can come to no other conclusion than that one-half of the actual potato crop of Ireland is either destroyed, or remains in a state unfit for the food of man. We, moreover, feel it our duty to apprise you that we feel this to be a low estimate. We would now add, melancholy as this picture is, that, in all probability, the late rainy weather has rendered the mischief yet greater. It is also necessary to direct your attention to the quantity of seed potatoes which must be reserved for the coming year, if the cultivation of this plant is to be persevered in. We can state that, on an average, one-eighth of the crop is required for planting the same quantity of ground; so that, in fact, only three-eighths of the crop can, in our view, be at the moment assumed to be available for food."

I am now stating the particular circumstances which led to the dissolution of the Government; and, in doing so, the House must bear in mind that I refer to two periods—the first interval comprising what occurred between the 1st and 6th of November, and the second interval, what occurred between the 25th of November, and the 6th of December; and those who dissented from my opinion in the Cabinet, must recollect that any letters or reports received since the 6th of November, can have no bearing whatsoever upon the advice which I gave between the 1st and 6th of November. The letters and reports only which have a bearing upon that advice, are those which were received prior to the 6th of November. Those letters referred, many of them, to the state of the crop on the Continent; many of them, also, to the state of the crop in England; and some of them to the crop in Ireland. The Cabinet met several times between the 31st of October and the 6th of November. On the 1st of November, recollect, there was no agitation, and no petitions had been presented. It appeared to me, however, that the reports received from the Lord Lieutenant—that the example of foreign countries—that the example of Belgium, which had cleared the market of Liverpool almost in one day, and had caused a rise of 75 per cent. in the price of rice—rendered it the duty of the Government to take a step, which was not without a precedent, and either by an Order in Council, or by calling Parliament together within a fortnight, to remove for a time all restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn. That was the advice I gave on the 1st of November. I was perfectly ready to take the responsibility of issuing an Order in Council. The period was a critical one. There was an advantage in issuing an Order in Council, for time would thus have been saved; and I was prepared, as the head of the Government, to take that responsibility. I did not insist, however, upon the Order in Council; for I was equally prepared to call Parliament together immediately, and to advise the removal, for a limited period, of all restrictions on the importation of corn. I did not consider it any objection that the temporary removal of those restrictions might compel a reconsideration of the Tariff. My advice at that period was not followed. Three only of my Colleagues concurred in the view which I took, and we separated on the 6th November; I reserving to myself the right of again calling the Cabinet together, in the hope that if the alarm which I apprehended should be confirmed by subsequent occurrences, the advice which I gave would be followed at a later period. Now, so far as

I was personally concerned, that was the period for me to have tendered my resignation. I can truly say that if I did not tender it at that time, it was purely from public, and not from private considerations. I was met as a Minister by great difficulties; but I felt it my bounden duty to adhere to my post, and not to evade, as I might have done, those difficulties with which I was beset. I might have said, "My opinion has been overruled by a great majority. Three only of my Colleagues take the same views that I do, and I cannot consent to incur the responsibility of continuing in office." That was the course which I might have adopted. I resolved, however, not to abandon my post. The Cabinet was reassembled on the 25th of November. I confess that the information received in the interval had not in the slightest degree diminished my apprehensions. In the meantime we had taken, with the unanimous concurrence of the Cabinet, extraordinary steps; we had appointed a Commission to inquire and to take precautionary measures against a sudden occurrence of distress. We had appointed a Commision for the purpose of making inquiries in Ireland, and had taken steps also to prevent the spread of fever, which is so frequently the consequence of distress. On the 25th November, then, it became necessary to consider what should be the instructions to be issued to the Commission. Those instructions were determined on, and received the assent of the Cabinet. I stated at that time that it appeared to me that the issuing of those instructions was inconsistent with the determination to maintain untouched the present Corn Law. I could not, therefore, consent to the giving instructions to take precautionary measures against scarcity, and against fever, the consequence of scarcity, without reserving to myself the entire power of proposing other measures for relieving that scarcity. The instructions were issued, and again I brought under the consideration of the Government the same measure which I brought forward on the 1st of November—that is, the suspension of the duties upon foreign corn, either by an Order in Council or by the sanction of Parliament. At that period, however, my position was entirely changed. I had advised the same measure on the 1st of November; but the lapse of time, the increase of agitation, and other circumstances, had materially affected my position. I was overruled in the Cabinet at the earlier period, when it could have been done more naturally and more effectually. I felt that, by the pressure of circumstances, my position was now changed. The noble Lord opposite had in the interval written his letter; and I admit, giving him credit for the best intentions, that it was a letter which, after what had passed in the Cabinet, materially affected my position. If the Order in Council had been issued on the 1st of November, it would have been the Order of a united Cabinet, the act would have appeared as one which was adopted by a united body, and under the sense of a great necessity. We should have anticipated agitation—it would have been impossible to attribute it to fear—it would have had the appearance of taking a natural and reasonable precaution—I will not say against a great calamity, but—against the possibility of a great calamity. It was impossible for me, and for those who agreed with me, after receiving the letter I have read from Drs. Lindley and Playfair, not to feel justified in adopting precautionary measures, even if they should afterwards prove to be unnecessary. But I felt on the 26th of November that nothing but the support of a united Government, after that letter of the noble Lord, would give me the chance of bringing this matter to a successful issue. I should then appear to have adopted the measure because it was recommended by the noble Lord. His letter was dated on the 22nd of November; the Cabinet met on the 26th; and the public impression would have been that the act of the 26th of November was but a servile adoption of the course recommended by the noble Lord. Still, notwithstanding this total alteration of my position, I would not have abandoned the post of danger if I had been supported by a united Cabinet. But that was not the result of our deliberations. It was my painful duty to differ from one for whom I have felt the sincerest friendship — for whose public and private character I felt and still feel the highest respect—I mean my noble Friend, Lord Stanley. The whole of these deliberations passed in the most entire and cordial amity; but his view, of course sincerely adopted, after mature deliberation, was a persuasion that the danger was greatly magnified, and that there was no necessity for the suspension of these laws. That was his opinion. My noble Friend stated not only that a suspension was not necessary, but he thought that there was no necessity for

a reconsideration of the Corn Law. I wish to give my noble Friend full credit for having formed his opinion with perfect honesty both of thought and purpose; but my opinion differed from his. I thought that there was a perfect justification at the time for extraordinary measures, and that the adoption of extraordinary measures would compel the reconsideration of the Corn Law. My noble Friend was not the only Member of the Administration who would have refused me the inestimable aid of his counsel and support; and that being the case—believing as I did that his resignation would be followed by that of others—thinking that under such circumstances the attempt to settle the question, which I thought to settle, would fail, and that I should fail after having made new combinations, and that I should be compelled to offer worse terms than the interests in question were entitled to claim at my hands, I felt it to be my duty, not being supported by the unanimous voice of my Colleagues, humbly to tender to Her Majesty my resignation. That resignation Her Majesty was pleased to accept; and as my late Colleagues were not themselves prepared to carry on the Government, Her Majesty, of Her own choice, sent for the noble Lord. The noble Lord undertook the task of forming an Administration—I believed then that I was in the situation of a private Member—that I was reduced to the ranks, and that I was at entire liberty to act on the suggestions of my own conscience; and I do not hesitate to say that in that capacity I would have done all in my power to promote the settlement of this question. The duty of adjusting would then have been left to the noble Lord, and in my capacity as a private Member I repeat that I would have done all I could to facilitate a fair and final settlement of the question. I remained under the impression that my functions had ceased until Saturday, the 20th of December. On Thursday, the 18th, it was intimated to me by Her Majesty that the noble Lord had undertaken the duty of forming an Administration, and on the 19th I received a gracious communication from Her Majesty stating that, as my relation to Her Majesty was about to terminate, she wished again to see me, for the purpose of taking a final farewell; and Saturday, the 20th of December, was the day appointed for that purpose. Upon waiting on Her Majesty—having heard through the courtesy of the noble Lord that he had found all his efforts to form an Administration were in vain—upon waiting on Her Majesty she was pleased to inform me, that so far from my taking my final leave, She was obliged to demand of me that I should withdraw my offer of resignation. Her Majesty had understood from those of my Colleagues who had differed from me that they were unprepared to form, and did not advise the formation, of a Government on the principle of the existing protective system. That the noble Lord, having undertaken the formation of a Government, had failed, from causes which it is unnecessary for me to notice; and the noble Lord having signified to Her Majesty that he had failed in his attempt to form a Government, Her Majesty requested that I should not persist in the tender of my resignation. I do not hesitate to say that I informed Her Majesty on the instant, and without a moment's hesitation, that the noble Lord having failed, and the Colleagues with whom I had heretofore acted not thinking it advisable to form an Administration, I did inform Her Majesty on the instant that I would return to town as Her Majesty's Minister—that I would withdraw my resignation, and inform my Colleagues of my determination, and urge them to assist me in carrying on the business of the country. I resolved, therefore, to meet them in the capacity of the Minister of the Crown, and to submit to them the measures I proposed to bring before Parliament. My noble Friend at once expressed the regret he felt that he could not co-operate with me in the difficult circumstances in which I was placed; but my Colleagues generally thought it was their duty to assist me in the arduous task I had undertaken. I have now, Sir, stated to the House the circumstances under which I felt it my duty to tender my resignation, and also the circumstances under which I again returned to office. Sir, I have given, on the earliest day on which it is possible, notice, that it is my intention, on the part of the Government, to submit to the consideration of the House measures connected with the commercial and financial affairs of the country. My firm determination is not to anticipate discussion. I know that the information I have given must be imperfect—I know that it may give rise to some misconception, and that I must ask for a suspension of the judgment of the House; but my desire is to disconnect a great political question from the mere personal and party one; to keep my explanation, so far as it refers to personal matters, distinct

from the great question itself, and my explanation therefore is necessarily imperfect. Therefore I do hope, that after having referred to the evidence in the possession of the Government, although many may think that the conclusions to which I and others have come as to the danger have been erroneous, I advise them not to be too confident, as we have yet seven months to pass before a new supply of food can be obtained for the people. I remember the accounts that have been lately coming in; but I ask the House not to form too precipitate a conclusion that the danger has passed. It is not so. Sir, I trust I may have satisfied some of those who think the conclusions were erroneous, that, at least, the advice was honest, for advising a resort to extraordinary measures. Sir, you can hardly estimate what a painful position it is for those whose public duty requires them to take precautions against so fearful a calamity as famine. I am charged with treason towards the agricultural interest—treason, indeed, it would be, if, with my deep conviction and solemn impressions of the position in which the country was placed, I subjected the agricultural interest to the odium of claiming protection against the hazard of scarcity—of calling for votes of public money for purchasing oats and other grain, while at the same time I resisted on their part any relaxation of the protective duties. Why, there are some points in which you could not possibly resist it. I take the law as it applies to the introduction of Indian corn. It is in a most anomalous state, because the present amount of duty on Indian corn depends on the price of barley. There is no connexion between them. There is no reason why it should rise and fall with the price of barley. Suppose a proposition had been made at the meeting of Parliament for the admission of Indian corn, what would be the consequence? Suppose the worst of things arises in Ireland, which I anticipate as possible, which I am afraid is probable, what would be the feeling with regard to the great agricultural interests of this country, if I, a member of it, had positively refused to make the slightest relaxation in the law? But this I tell you, to touch the Corn Law in some slight point, like that of Indian corn, would be dangerous to it. I thought it would be unjust to relax it upon one article, and to confine it to the nobler species of grain, oats, and wheat. Sir, I would rather keep the law intact and refuse to admit Indian corn, than come down to the House with such a proposition, and refuse to relax the duties on other descriptions of grain. I recollect the notice given by the hon. Member for Winchester, which was brought forward for the special benefit of the agricultural interest. Would it be possible to relax the law in that instance, and refuse it in the others? Sir, I venture to think that it would be impossible, consistently with the true interests of agriculture, to take such a step. Sir, I have felt, as I said before, that when after the severe labour of the last Session of Parliament, almost every hour of the recess was devoted to calculating the chances that might result from the disease, and to collecting evidence on the subject, night and day, and adopting precautions against the possibility of the calamity which might result from such a state of the crop—I felt it rather hard to find myself the object of accusations that I was unfaithful to the interests of the country, or to any special and peculiar interest. I cannot, of course, but recollect the repeated manifestations of great confidence which I have at various times experienced—those manifestations cannot be without their effect on my mind—but notwithstanding those manifestations of confidence, the constant repetition of those observations to which I have adverted, of those accusations that I have been unfaithful, renders it absolutely necessary that I should allude to them. I have over and over again attempted to define the relation in which I conceived myself to stand with respect to party, to my country, and to my Sovereign, and it is necessary that I should again describe that relation. I see it over and over again repeated, that I am under a personal obligation for holding the great office which I have the honour to occupy. I see it over and over again repeated, that I was placed in that position by a party, and that the party which elevated me to my present position is powerful enough also to displace me. I see constantly put forth allusions to the power of those men to remove me from office. I am afraid that, with respect to holding the office that I hold, there is a very material difference between the extent of the obligation and the amount of the penalty. I am not under an obligation to any man, or to any body of men, for being compelled to submit to the sacrifices which I have submitted to, and to undergo the official duties and labour which I have undertaken. I do not underrate the distinction and importance of the posi-

tion; but let us understand—and I am speaking not for myself, but for the many honourable men who have preceded me of different parties—let us understand what is the nature of the obligation we owe for being placed in office. As I said before, I do not undervalue the distinction and the power which are attached to the occupation of that office; but what, I ask, is its real value? It does not consist in the power of distributing honours, or conferring appointments. That power, it is true, is inseparable from the office of Prime Minister, and cannot be separated from it without injuring its authority; but the power of giving the highest rewards and the highest offices, is constantly accompanied by the invidious duty of selection, and the disappointment of those who may not have been selected. For my part, I value power not one farthing for any such privilege. I have served four Sovereigns; George III., and his three successors. In the reign of George III. the office which I held was so subordinate, that it was impossible my services could have attracted his notice; but, as I have said, I also served his three successors—George IV. as Regent and King, King William IV., and Queen Victoria; and during the reigns of those Sovereigns, it has been my fate to hold some of the highest offices in the State. I served each of those Sovereigns at critical times and in critical circumstances—I did so with constant truth to each, and I constantly said to each of those Sovereigns that there was but one favour, but one distinction, one reward which I desired, that it was in their power to offer me—namely, the simple acknowledgment, on their part, that I had been to them a loyal and faithful Minister. I have now stated my view of the obligations which are conferred on those in power; but let me remark that there is that valuable privilege in power, that it gives constant and favourable opportunities for exertion; and affords great facilities to the holder of it to render his country service, according to his sense of the public good. That, in my mind, constitutes the real value of official power; and I can say with truth, that I have never abused that power for any unworthy object. I have tried to use it for the promotion of the public interests and the advancement of the public good. I used it for the public advantage, and in doing so I cannot charge myself with any conduct at variance with the true and comprehensive policy of a Conservative Minister. Sir, I do not think it at variance with Conservative policy, that I and my Colleagues have attempted to repair the disasters of Cabul—that we have attempted to infuse into the Indian army that spirit which had been checked by the defeats and misfortunes of Affghanistan. Nor do I think it inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that I have laboured to assuage that feeling of animosity which for a long time prevailed between this country and another powerful and great nation; and I cannot think that this paragraph in the Speech of the Sovereign—

> "The Convention concluded with France in the course of last year, for the more effectual suppression of the Slave Trade, is about to be carried into immediate execution by the active co-operation of the two Powers on the Coast of Africa. It is my desire that our present union, and the good understanding which so happily exists between us, may always be employed to promote the interests of humanity, and to secure the peace of the world;"—

I cannot, I repeat, think it inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that we should be enabled to insert that paragraph, and that we should be engaged in trying to efface the recollections of the exploits of both countries in war, or extracting from those recollections everything which savours of bitterness; that we should be trying to engage in a rivalry, not in exploits on the field of blood, but in an honourable competition for the advancement of commerce and civilization, and the improvement of the social condition of the people. It is not inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that we should increase the trade of the country by removing restrictions; nor is it inconsistent with sound Conservative policy, that we should reduce the taxation of the country whilst we increased its revenue. It is not, in my mind, inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that we have extinguished agitation and discouraged sedition, not by stringent coercive laws, but by encouraging the idea amongst the great body of the people, that we, the rich and powerful, are willing to take a more than ordinary share of the public burdens, and to remove those burdens from the people so far as it is possible. Sir, believe me, to conduct the Government of this country is a most arduous duty; I may say it without irreverence, that these ancient institutions, like our physical frames, are "fearfully and wonderfully made." It is no easy task to ensure the united action of an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed House of Commons. I have done everything I could do, and

have thought it consistent with true Conservative policy, to reconcile these three branches of the State. I have thought it consistent with true Conservative policy to promote so much of happiness and contentment among the people that the voice of disaffection should be no longer heard, and that thoughts of the dissolution of our institutions should be forgotten in the midst of physical enjoyment. These were my attempts, and I thought them not inconsistent with true and enlarged Conservative policy. These were my objects in accepting office—it is a burden too great for my physical, and far beyond my intellectual structure; and to be relieved from it with perfect honour would be the greatest favour that could be conferred on me. But as a feeling of honour and strong sense of duty require me to undertake those responsible functions, I declare, Sir, that I am ready to incur these risks, to bear these burdens, and to front all these honourable dangers. But, Sir, I will not take the step with mutilated power and shackled authority. I will not stand at the helm during the tempestuous nights that I have seen, if the vessel be not allowed fairly to pursue the course which I think she ought to take. I will not, Sir, undertake to direct the course of the vessel by the observations which have been taken in 1842. I will reserve to myself the marking out of that course; and I must, for the public interest, claim for myself the undoubted power of judging of those measures which I conceive will be better for the country to propose. Sir, I do not wish to be the Minister of England; but while I have the high honour of holding that office, I am determined to hold it by no servile tenure. I will only hold that office upon the condition of being unshackled by any other obligations than those of consulting the public interests, and of providing for the public safety.

Lord JOHN RUSSELL said: Sir, I think it necessary to rise at an early period of this debate, in order to offer to the House an explanation of the course which I thought fit to adopt during the late changes in the Administration which have been brought so prominently before us. In order that I might be enabled to lay this explanation before the House at this early period, I applied to the right hon. Baronet opposite, to lay before Her Majesty my humble application, that I might state in my place in Parliament the circumstances which induced me to take office on the receipt of Her Majesty's command, and subsequently to resign that office. I stated to the right hon. Baronet at the same time, that if it were more convenient for the public service, and more conducive to the objects of the right hon. Gentleman—with regard to any measures he intended to bring forward for the consideration of Parliament—that I would postpone my explanation to any later day, that I should be most ready to comply with his wishes by at once consenting to postpone it. The right hon. Baronet informed me, not only that Her Majesty was graciously pleased to comply with my application, but that it perfectly accorded with his own convenience that I should make this statement at the commencement of the Session. I will now offer that explanation; and I trust when I do so, that if it should be found to have any reference to the measure intended to be proposed by the right hon. Baronet, it will be recollected that I agreed to a postponement of the explanation, if the right hon. Gentleman opposite deemed it necessary. Before I make that explanation, it is necessary for me to refer to a letter which has been mentioned in the course of the speech of the right hon. Baronet; and I refer to it, not because he stated that it caused him embarrassment, but because some persons in their comments upon that letter thought it proper to attribute to me motives in writing it, very different from those which actuated me, and which I will now describe. Private affairs induced me to visit Edinburgh at the latter end of October, and remaining in that city until the beginning of November, the Lord Provost and the corporation of Edinburgh did me the honour of conferring the freedom of the city upon me. On that occasion, I addressed the Lord Provost and the Corporation; and I took especial care in that address (stating at the same time that I took that especial care) not to refer to any measures which might be under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government with respect to the Corn Laws. In a short time after that meeting, the Lord Provost expressed to me his regret that I had not given my opinion on the subject of the Corn Laws; and he further said, that it was the wish of many of the citizens of Edinburgh to have a public dinner, at which it was intended that I should be requested to attend. I said that, in such a case, entertaining, as I did, a strong opinion on the subject of the Corn

Laws, I could not be silent, though I could not declare my opinion fully without some risk of embarrassing the counsels of my Sovereign. I found at that time by the public prints and *London Gazette*, that Her Majesty's servants had met for deliberation on several days, and that no proposition appeared to have been adopted. At all events no step was taken; and I saw also, by the *London Gazette*, that there had been a further prorogation of Parliament from the day named for its assembling. I thought, under these circumstances, that the Ministers were not doing their duty to their Sovereign and the country. I was of opinion that it would have been wiser to call Parliament together to consider the subject of the Corn Laws; and having seen many statements put forth with respect to the potato crop in Ireland (for the inquiry was not confined to the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues), I thought something should be immediately done. The right hon. Baronet has stated that a Commission had been appointed by the Government to report on the condition of a crop which forms the food of four millions of the people; and the result of the investigation pursued by that Commission was a statement that four-eighths of the crop were deficient, and that one of the remaining four-eighths would be required for seed, thus leaving only three-eighths of the crop for the supply of the people. I considered such a state of things to be most alarming; and it now appears that I was not alone in this opinion; for the right hon. Baronet himself has stated, that the same opinion was entertained by him at that period, an opinion equally strong, and that in conjunction with three of his Colleagues he had expressed that opinion in a Cabinet Council. I could not know what passed on the occasions of those meetings of Her Majesty's Council; I could only guess from the general result, that the majority of the Cabinet had come to a decision, the consequence of which was inaction. In this state of things I wrote the letter alluded to, which was published, I think, on the 26th of November, which stated strongly my opinion, and also an opinion that as the Government did not seem to be active in taking proper measures, it would be necessary to give some public expression of opinion, in order to control their course, and obtain the redress which was absolutely necessary; and I think that in so stating my opinion to the public, if the facts which the right hon. Baronet has stated are correct, I was perfectly justified. I know that some persons of low minds have supposed that I intended, as it is called, to advertise for office by expressing those opinions; but nothing could be further from my intention. I intended merely to call for such an expression of public opinion as would oblige the Government to take the subject into immediate consideration, and thus save the country from the evils of famine. On the 25th or 26th of November, it appears that the right hon. Baronet again urged on his Colleagues that the ports should be opened, and further, that the Corn Laws themselves should be considered. Unfortunately—for I think it was a misfortune—his Colleagues did not agree to this proposition; and it appears there was a great difference of opinion on the subject. The right hon. Baronet has not indeed explained the extent of the difference; but it was such that the Cabinet could not carry on the Government, and on the 6th of December the Ministry resigned. On the 8th of December, at night, I received the command of Her Majesty to wait on Her at Osborne House, in the Isle of Wight. In obedience to that command I arrived in London on the 10th of December, and on the 11th I proceeded to the Isle of Wight. Of course it appeared to me probable that Her Majesty had received the resignation of Her Ministers, and that She had commanded my presence at Osborne House in order to consult me as to the formation of a new Administration. I felt that, under ordinary circumstances, the only thing which I could properly do, was most respectfully to decline the Commission of Her Majesty, as the party to which I belong are in a minority of from ninety to one hundred in the House of Commons, and I could not, with regard to the public service, expose Her Majesty to the chance of another change of Government, to which my acceptance of office would probably speedily lead. I need not now explain why it was that in the House of Commons those who in general agree with me in opinion, are inferior in numbers to those who generally follow the right hon. Baronet; but I must say on this occasion, that during the whole of our Administration our motives never received a fair construction, nor did our measures ever receive an impartial consideration from those who were our political opponents. But be that as it may, with our minority I should be of opinion that, under ordinary circumstances, it would not be for

the public good if we attempted to form an Administration. No sooner, however, was I honoured with an audience by Her Majesty, than Her Majesty informed me that She had sent for me in order to entrust me with the formation of a new Administration. I respectfully stated then to Her Majesty, as I have now stated to this House, that those with whom I acted were in a minority in the House of Commons; and Her Majesty replied, by putting into my hands a paper which Her Majesty said had been given to Her by the right hon. Baronet the day before. That paper stated generally the reasons why the right hon. Baronet resigned, and added, that he should be ready in his private capacity to aid and give every support to the new Minister whom Her Majesty might select to effect a settlement of the question of the Corn Laws. Sir, after perusing this letter, I immediately stated to Her Majesty that this circumstance had altered the state of the question, and that if she would permit me I would consult those with whom I am in the habit of acting, and ascertain what their sentiments were with respect to our duty to Her Majesty. I immediately came back to London and had a consultation with those of my friends who were within my reach. They were of opinion that it was very desirable, if possible, to know what was the exact nature of the measures which the right hon. Baronet would be willing to support. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department was good enough to call on me and to inform me generally of the state of this country and Ireland, and communicated to me all the information it was desirable for me to obtain, and I stated to him the wishes of those Gentlemen who were acting with me on this subject. On the following day he informed me that the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) did not think that it was for the public service, or at all a convenient course, that he should state the details of the measures which he had proposed. I thereupon called together those with whom I had acted, and stated to them that I would endeavour to form an outline of the measures on the subject of the Corn Laws, which I proposed to have communicated to the right hon. Baronet, and thus endeavour to ascertain whether they were the measures which he was likely to approve of. I may be here asked what was the exact nature of the measures upon which I wished to learn the sentiments of the right hon. Gentleman. I have already stated I did not think it advisable that, in mere deference to my own party, I should have attempted to form an Administration; but when there was a prospect of the settlement of the Corn Laws by the assistance which we hoped to receive from the right hon. Baronet, I did consider that such a settlement would have proved of such great advantage to the country—would have put an end to such discontent and excitement—that I should be justified in encountering great risks in the attainment of such an object. But there was another and a further object to be considered. Supposing that I should have undertaken to propose a settlement of the question relating to corn, should I have attempted it by proposing to this House a measure on the subject, and by endeavouring to obtain such a majority as would influence the House of Lords in favour of its support—or should I have proposed to Her Majesty the measure of dissolving Parliament, and by such means sought to obtain a triumph over our opponents upon this subject of the Corn Laws by the force of public opinion acting upon a general election? I confess if it were possible to obtain a settlement of the Corn Laws without having recourse to a general election, adding to the strife amongst the various interests of the country, manufacturing and commercial, the landed and agricultural, I should not have hesitated to pursue that course which I consider would have been beneficial to the general interests of the country. But I felt it to be impossible for me to obtain such a concurrence in this House without I had not only those who generally agree with me to support me; not only those also who are supporters of absolute free trade, but also the support of the right hon. Baronet himself and a considerable number of those who usually support him. The right hon. Gentleman again expressed his objection, for various reasons, to state the details of the measure which he would support. I will, if the right hon. Baronet thinks it necessary, read the letter in which he so expressed himself, and of which Her Majesty permitted me to take a copy. It is, however, I think only necessary for me to state that the right hon. Gentleman, for reasons that were no doubt very cogent and forcible, did not think it advisable that a person out of the service of the Crown should be consulted upon the various details of a particular measure, or upon any subsequent modifications of mea-

sures, which we should think it necessary to bring forward upon our own responsibility. I had, Sir, then to consider what kind of measure, if I formed a Government, it would be our duty to propose. I acted then with the same feelings with which I wrote the letter alluded to by the right hon. Baronet—a letter written under a strong sense of duty, and with a strong apprehension of danger; and only two persons with whom I was in immediate relation were cognizant of that letter before it was published. The apprehensions of public danger, and the alarming state in which the people generally were placed, induced me to think it necessary to consult those who generally agree in opinion with me, who were dispersed in different parts of the country, before I undertook so arduous a duty as the settlement of the Corn Laws, that I might avoid the risk of forming a Government, and putting the country to great inconvenience, when there was a chance of the measure not being assented to by my Colleagues. Sir, the grounds on which I stated in my letter that the Corn Laws ought to be settled were, that "the imposition of any duty at present, without a provision for its extinction within a short period, would but prolong a contest already sufficiently fruitful of animosity and discontent." Another point on which I placed stress was, that "neither a Government nor a Legislature can ever regulate the corn market with the beneficial effects which the entire freedom of sale and purchase are sure of themselves to produce." I stated further on, "Let the Ministry propose such a revision of the taxes as in their opinion may render the public burdens more just and more equal, let them add any other provisions which caution, and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest." Those were the general principles on which I proposed the consideration of the question as to the Corn Laws. Perhaps I can best explain my views by reading a letter which I had the honour to address to Her Majesty, a part of which was referred to by the right hon. Gentleman. I cannot read it without referring to some measures which the right hon. Gentleman is stated to have in contemplation. I should state that I repeat them from memory, because of the first letter of the right hon. Gentleman, which was shown me by Her Majesty, I never had a copy. This is the letter which I sent to Her Majesty:—

"Chesham Place, Dec. 16, 1845.

"Lord John Russell presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and has the honour to submit to Your Majesty the following considerations:—

"Sir Robert Peel's letter to Your Majesty, communicated to Lord John Russell at Osborne House, offers the support of Sir Robert Peel to his successors, provided their measures should be founded on certain principles, which are there explained, and framed in a spirit of caution and forbearance towards the interests to be affected.

"The measures which Sir Robert Peel had in contemplation appear to have been—a present suspension of the duties on corn; a Repeal of the Corn Laws at no remote period, preceded by a diminution of duties; relief to the occupiers of land from burdens by which they are peculiarly affected, so far as it may be practicable.

"Upon full consideration of these proposals, Lord John Russell is prepared to assent to the opening of the ports, and to the fiscal relief which it was intended to afford.

"But upon maturely weighing the second proposal, namely, that by which duties would, after a suspension, or temporary repeal, be reimposed and again diminished, there appear to him to be grave objections to such a measure.

"The advantage given thereby to the land appears to him more apparent than real; the uncertainty of prices in future years would be aggravated, and the prospect of a complete free trade would be still kept in the distance; the prospect alarming the farmer, and the distance irritating the merchant and manufacturer.

"In this view he finds that many persons deeply engaged to the maintenance and support of the agricultural class entirely participate.

"So great an object as the settlement of this question, might indeed have been held sufficient to justify the support of Sir Robert Peel's Administration, had they proposed such a measure. But, as Lord John Russell is placed at present, he could not himself propose a measure against which the weight of argument, as well as public opinion, appears to him to preponderate.

"Had the harvest been plentiful, and corn cheap, it might have been very advisable to have diminished the duties gradually; but the restoration of a duty after suspension, has all the appearance of the re-enactment of a protective law.

"Lord John Russell humbly submits to Your Majesty, that should the proposal of an immediate repeal, instead of immediate suspension and ultimate repeal of the Corn Law, preclude Sir Robert Peel from affording that support to the new Government which he so spontaneously and handsomely offered in his letter of the 10th of December, Lord John Russell must humbly decline the task so graciously confided to him by Your Majesty.

"Lord John Russell concurs with the reasoning of Sir Robert Peel, which shows the inexpediency of pledging him to the outline of a series of measures.

"The measures for fiscal purposes, therefore, would have to be considered in detail by those alone who may be in Your Majesty's service.

"Lord John Russell trusts that Your Majesty will attribute the reluctance which he feels to undertake the Government, without a previous knowledge of the opinion of Sir Robert Peel, to the extent here stated, to his very deep sense of the injury the country may sustain from the rejection of a measure of such vital importance, and not to a desire to obtain a security for those who may be in power"

Her Majesty was graciously pleased to answer that letter the same evening, informing me that She had sent to Sir Robert Peel, and that She fully appreciated the motives by which I had been actuated. I must say, in this place, that the remarks which have been made out of doors upon my inability to bring those whom I consulted into an agreement on the subject of the Corn Laws, were utterly unfounded. Those whom I consulted were all, with one exception—my brother, the Duke of Bedford—persons who had belonged to Her Majesty's Privy Council, and had been in Cabinet offices in the present and the former reign; and those persons entirely coincided in the sentiments which I entertained on the subject. Her Majesty desired me, the next day, to wait upon Her at Windsor Castle; and when I arrived there, She was graciously pleased to show me a letter of the right hon. Gentleman's, which, if he does not object, I will read to the House. [Sir R. PEEL: I have no objection.]

"Whitehall, December 17, 1845.

"Sir Robert Peel presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and takes the earliest opportunity of acknowledging the receipt of Your Majesty's letter of yesterday, which reached him at a late hour last night.

"Sir Robert Peel feels assured that Your Majesty will permit him humbly to refer to the communications which he has addressed to Your Majesty, since his tender of resignation, as an evidence of his earnest desire to co-operate in a private capacity in the adjustment of the question of the Corn Laws.

"In the letter of Lord John Russell to Your Majesty, he expresses his concurrence in the reasoning of Sir Robert Peel, which shows the inexpediency of pledging Sir Robert Peel to the outline of a series of measures connected with the settlement of that question.

"Lord John Russell requires, at the same time, that Sir Robert Peel should give assurances, which amount substantially to a pledge, that he will support one of those measures, namely, the immediate and total repeal of the Corn Laws.

"Sir Robert Peel humbly expresses to Your Majesty his regret, that he does not feel it to be consistent with his duty to enter upon the consideration of this important question in Parliament, being fettered by a previous engagement of the nature of that required from him."

Now, Sir (continued the noble Lord), I think the right hon. Gentleman has somewhat misunderstood the letter which I addressed to Her Majesty. What I wanted was, not a previous pledge on the part of the right hon. Gentleman; but what I thought was, that the right hon. Gentleman having stated the general nature of the measures he proposed—if we afterwards proposed a measure going beyond what he was prepared to bring forward—if he should then find himself precluded from supporting it, we should incur the same evil I have already alluded to. What I wished from the right hon. Gentleman was, that he should not feel himself precluded from taking the measure into consideration when brought into Parliament. The letter I have just read, though it proceeds on a misunderstanding of my letter, seems to amount substantially to this—that the right hon. Gentleman was quite ready to consider, and did not regard himself as precluded from supporting such a measure, if brought before Parliament by Her Majesty's Ministers. On considering that letter, those with whom I consulted, as well as myself, were of opinion, that though the task was one subject to great risk, though it was full of danger and hazard, yet, placed as we were, we should run that peril, and assure Her Majesty that we would undertake the task. When I came to that determination, I was by no means blind to the very heavy responsibility which lay upon me. I have already said that I wished the question of the Corn Laws settled; but I wished that settlement to be effected, if possible, without a violent struggle between different interests in the country, by the full and deliberate consent of Parliament. I was aware—I hardly know how I should express that opinion—but I was aware that many politicians, and many who care nothing about politics, parties connected with the great manufacturing towns, and interested in the question, as well as men who sit on this side of the House, who are of the Liberal party, whatever their various denominations, had declared, when the question was put to them whether they were disposed to support a measure, brought forward by Sir R. Peel, for the repeal of the Corn Laws, that they would not hesitate to do so, having more at heart the success of the measure, than the advancement of the interests of any political party; while, on the other hand, I was also aware that there were men who followed Sir R. Peel, who would follow him and give him their confidence so as to maintain him in power, but who would not vote for any measure founded on the same principle which I might bring forward. Now, I must state this, because it is a fact, that the opinions to which I refer in favour of such a measure were conveyed to me not only by many persons who were personally known to me, but by many others whose names I had never heard—

persons connected with Manchester and other places who were especially anxious for a settlement of the question. I thought it would be incurring great hazard and risk to take upon myself to act upon a different opinion. But I certainly thought that while the right hon. Gentleman and his Colleagues who supported him in the Cabinet would promote a settlement of the Corn Laws, there were many others, such as the noble Lord who moved the Address to-night, that would give me their support if they thought the measure suited to the circumstances of the country, though I was not the person who possessed their political confidence. But we felt we had a great risk to encounter, and that if we should fail in our attempt, if we proposed a measure only to give rise to a long-protracted struggle, or some new Administration should be formed to begin a new settlement of the question, and propose a new measure, I knew that on us would fall the blame of having attempted what we could not accomplish. While, then, having this difficult task before me, I felt it was necessary that all those with whom I consulted should be ready and willing to take part in an Administration, to bear the risk and encounter the opposition to which they would be exposed, and to give their co-operation and advice as official Ministers of the Crown. I must say that the disposition of those with whom I consulted in general, I must bear this testimony that they looked only to public objects, that they did not consider whether it was for the advantage of their party or of themselves that an Administration should be formed, but that they did consider above all, and over all, the great questions which they were called upon to decide. I therefore told Her Majesty on the 18th of December, that I was ready to undertake the formation of an Administration; but on the following morning, after I had endeavoured to make my arrangements, I found that one of those with whom I had consulted had objections which it was impossible to overcome, and that I should lose his assistance in the Administration which I proposed to form. I do not think it necessary to enter on the grounds of those objections: it is quite enough to say that they deprived me of his assistance in forming an Administration. His name has been frequently mentioned, and I see no reason why I should not state that I refer to Lord Grey. With the highest respect for Lord Grey, for his great talents, for his courage and his honesty, I should, nevertheless, not have thought, on an ordinary occasion, that the loss of a single person, even of his importance, should have prevented me from undertaking the formation of a Government. But when I considered the risk which was to be encountered, and the necessity which existed that we should all act together on this great question—when I considered that my noble Friend was among the first of those acting with me in Parliament, who declared that he regarded no other measure but complete free trade in corn, adequate to meet the exigencies of the country—when I put all those things together, I did think that the task of forming a Government leaving out my noble Friend, was a task which I was not justified in attempting. I could not but think that if my noble Friend was not a Member of the Cabinet, all kinds of interpretations might be put upon his absence, and that the Ministry would be jeopardized at its very commencement. Considering, therefore, the necessity which existed for a complete alliance, I came to the conclusion that it was necessary for me to give up the task which Her Majesty had graciously confided to me. Some people may say that it was possible for me to make up the difference to which I have referred; but I could not but remember that for eight days the country had been without a Government, and I could not but think if I did not succeed, that the right hon. Gentleman would attempt to form an Administration if I were unable to do so. It was with these views that I waited upon Her Majesty on the 20th of December, with the following letter, which I will now read to the House:—

"Chesham Place, Dec. 20, 1845.

"Lord John Russell presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and has the honour to state that he has found it impossible to form an Administration.

"Lord John Russell was aware from the first moment when Your Majesty was pleased to propose to him this commission, that there were very great difficulties in the way, which it required the most cordial co-operation on the part of his Friends, and the firm support of a large portion of those who followed Sir Robert Peel, to surmount.

"Lord John Russell has had solely in view the settlement of the question of Corn Laws by which the country is so much agitated.

"Those who have served Your Majesty and Your Royal Predecessor in Cabinet Offices during the Administrations of Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne, who were now in political connexion with Lord John Russell, were consulted by him. They

agreed on the principles by which they would be guided in framing a measure for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Thus one great difficulty was surmounted. But as the party which acts with Lord John Russell is in a minority in both Houses of Parliament, it was necessary to ascertain how far they were likely to obtain the support of Sir Robert Peel.

"Your Majesty is acquainted with all that has passed on this subject. Lord John Russell is quite ready to admit that Sir Robert Peel has been willing, from the commencement to the end, to diminish the difficulties in the course of a new Government prepared to attempt the settlement of the Corn Laws. But Sir Robert Peel could not, of course, rely on the support of his political Friends should the proposed measure be in their eyes dangerous and unwise.

"In this uncertainty of obtaining a majority in the House of Commons, it was absolutely necessary that all those who were prominent in the political party to which Lord John Russell is attached should give their zealous aid, and act in concert in the new Administration.

"Lord John Russell has, in one instance, been unable to obtain this concert, and he must now consider that task as hopeless, which has been from the beginning hazardous.

"Lord John Russell is deeply sensible of the embarrassment caused by the present state of public affairs. He will be ready, therefore, to do all in his power, as a Member of Parliament, to promote the settlement of that question, which, in present circumstances, is the source of so much danger, especially to the welfare and peace of Ireland.

"Lord John Russell would have formed his Ministry on the basis of a complete free trade in corn, to be established at once, without gradation or delay. He would have accompanied that proposal with measures of relief, to a considerable extent, of the occupiers of land, from the burdens to which they are subjected. But he will be little disposed to insist, as a Member of Parliament, on what may seem to Your Majesty's advisers an impracticable course. The country requires, above all things, an early and peaceable settlement of a question which, if not so settled, may in an adverse state of affairs cause a fearful convulsion."

I should now state, Sir, that I owe the deepest gratitude to Her Majesty for the gracious manner in which Her Majesty has been pleased to entrust to my hands the task of forming an Administration, and the kindness with which my endeavours have been received. Her Majesty has imposed on me a debt of obligation which I shall feel to the end of my days. I should also state, with respect to the right hon. Gentleman opposite, that the offer of his support was spontaneous on his part, and that there was nothing at all in his subsequent communication to Her Majesty which rendered our task more difficult. With regard to my noble Friend, Lord Grey, I was certainly extremely sorry to find that I was not able to overcome his objections; but I should at the same time state that they did not relate to any personal objects of his own, but to matters of a public nature. With respect to the measure now in agitation, the settlement of the Corn Laws, I do hope that we may be able to come to a peaceable settlement of that question at the present time. I see with no inconsiderable surprise, that at meetings of the agricultural interest, it is alleged that the danger in which we are placed has been exaggerated; that scarcity does not exist; that the prospect of famine has been exaggerated; and therefore we ought to leave the protection laws, as far as food is concerned, as they at present stand. But do these gentlemen never carry their thoughts forward? Do they never consider that if it has pleased Providence to visit us with a calamity lighter than was at one time dreaded, there may come a time when scarcity may be undoubted, when it may come home to the eyes, and understandings, and feelings of all men, and when the prospect of famine may be too near and too real not to appal the stoutest hearts among us? Do these Gentlemen wish to wait for such a time as that? Do they wish to wait till no power of choice is left them—till they have no discretion—and till nothing remains but a capitulation to the multitude, who will imperiously demand the repeal of those laws which limit the supply of food? Has any one ventured to say that, under the law of 1842, enough corn is grown in this country to provide food without the assistance of a foreign supply? The House has heard what the author of that measure has said with regard to what he considers to be the result of his observation of its working. With his experience and great natural talents, placed as he is at the head of affairs in this country—a position which is one of the highest honour that a subject can enjoy; but full, at the same time, as he has truly described it, of the most grave and most solemn responsibility—the right hon. Gentleman is now convinced that its operation is not satisfactory. I trust, therefore, that we are now about to see the settlement of this question. When the right hon. Gentleman brings forward his measure, I may, perhaps, have some observations to make upon the provisions which may accompany it, and also upon the inexpediency of waiting till the present time before any steps were taken. For the present, however, I will refrain from any observations. I must, however, advert to another subject which I

always have in my mind when I think of public affairs—I mean the subject of Ireland. It may be that the right hon. Gentleman has more means than I have of bringing forward such a measure as will obtain the assent of majorities in both Houses of Parliament. With respect, however, to Ireland, I consider that I should be enabled to conduct the government of that country in a satisfactory manner by the aid of persons whose spirit of conciliation and firmness would have tempered and allayed many of the evils which afflict that country. I certainly did consider, that while I proposed a measure for the abolition of restrictive duties on corn, I might be able to bring forward a large and comprehensive scheme on the subject of Ireland, which would lay the foundation of future peace. I did certainly indulge such dreams; and it is upon that account, and upon that account only, that I regret that the expectations which I had entertained of forming a Government have been disappointed. I cannot assent to any opinions which may be expressed upon the wisdom of the present Government's conduct towards Ireland, from the time when they came into office to the present hour. There are in Ireland two parties; one of them seeking to carry that dangerous and fatal measure, the Repeal of the Union, while the other party ask for measures which must affect their fellow subjects injuriously, and evidently consider that partiality should still be the rule of government, and that their Roman Catholic brethren are not entitled to the same favour as the Protestant portion of the community. While I see Ireland divided between these parties, each of them banded in support of their own views, I cannot consider that there is any prospect of peace in that country. I am sorry to say, that I do not see any symptom of measures which will procure peace in Ireland, and induce its people to look with affection towards this country. I will not, however, enter further on that subject. I have stated to the House what took place when Her Majesty was pleased to call on me to form a Government. I have stated also why I was unable to effect that; and also, very shortly, my opinion on the policy which has been pursued towards Ireland. I wish now only to say, that whether in or out of office, I shall be ready to give my assent to any measure which is calculated to promote the true interests of the country; and I trust that the permanent settlement of this great question may take its date from the present Session of Parliament.*

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* The following is a copy of the Letter so frequently referred to :—

TO THE ELECTORS OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

Gentlemen,—The present state of the country, in regard to its supply of food, cannot be viewed without apprehension. Forethought and bold precaution may avert any serious evils—indecision and procrastination may produce a state of suffering which it is frightful to contemplate.

Three weeks ago it was generally expected that Parliament would be immediately called together. The announcement that Ministers were prepared at that time to advise the Crown to summon Parliament, and to propose on their first meeting a suspension of the import duties on corn, would have caused orders at once to be sent to various ports of Europe and America for the purchase and transmission of grain for the consumption of the United Kingdom. An Order in Council dispensing with the law was neither necessary nor desirable. No party in Parliament would have made itself responsible for the obstruction of a measure so urgent and so beneficial.

The Queen's Ministers have met and separated, without affording us any promise of such seasonable relief.

It becomes us, therefore, the Queen's subjects, to consider how we can best avert, or at all events mitigate, calamities of no ordinary magnitude.

Two evils require your consideration. One of these is the disease in the potatoes, affecting very seriously parts of England and Scotland, and committing fearful ravages in Ireland.

The extent of this evil has not yet been ascertained, and every week, indeed, tends either to reveal unexpected disease, or to abate in some districts the alarm previously entertained. But there is one misfortune peculiar to the failure in this particular crop. The effect of a bad corn harvest is, in the first place, to diminish the supply in the market, and to raise the price. Hence diminished consumption, and the privation of incipient scarcity, by which the whole stock is more equally distributed over the year, and the ultimate pressure is greatly mitigated. But the fear of the breaking out of this unknown disease in the potatoes induces the holders to hurry into the market, and thus we have, at one and the same time, rapid consumption and impending deficiency, scarcity of the article, and cheapness of price. The ultimate suffering must thereby be rendered far more severe than it otherwise would be. The evil to which I have adverted, may be owing to an adverse season, to a mysterious disease in the potato, to want of science, or of care in propagating the plant. In any of these cases, Government is no more subject to blame for the failure of the potato crop, than it was entitled to credit for the plentiful corn harvests which we have lately enjoyed.

Another evil, however, under which we are suffering, is the fruit of Ministerial counsel and Parliamentary law. It is the direct consequence of an Act of Parliament, passed three years ago, on the recommendation of the present advisers of the Crown. By this law grain of all kinds has been made subject to very high duties on importation. These duties are so contrived that the worse the quality of the corn, the higher is the duty; so

MR. DISRAELI said: Sir, I rise with some feeling of embarrassment to address the House at this stage of the debate, as it is only since I have entered the House that I have had the advantage of reading Her Majesty's Speech; and I had understood that the great question which now agitates this country was not to be discussed on the present occasion. I thought that, under protest perhaps, we should be allowed to address Her Majesty in language closely akin to that in which Her Majesty had addressed us, and that all topics which could excite any difference of opinion might be avoided. After the announcement of the right hon. Gentleman, that an early day was to be appointed for the discussion of that question, I should have abstained from intruding myself on the House at the present moment, had it not been for the peculiar tone of the right hon. Gentleman. I think that tone ought not to pass unnoticed. At the same time I do not wish to conceal my opinions on the general subject. I am not one of the converts. I am, perhaps, a member of a fallen party. To the opinions which I have expressed in this House in favour of protection, I adhere. They sent me to this House, and if I had relinquished them, I should have relinquished my seat also. I must say that the tone of the right hon. Gentleman is hardly fair towards the House, while he stops discussion upon a subject on which he himself has entered, and gives vent to his feelings with a fervency unusual to him. Sir, I admire a Minister who says that he holds power to give effect to his own convictions. These are sentiments that we must all applaud. Unfortunate will be the position of this country when a Minister pursues a line of policy adverse to the convictions which he himself entertains. But when we come to a question of such high delicacy as the present, we may be permitted to ask our-

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that when good wheat rises to 70*s.* a quarter, the average price of all wheat is 57*s.* or 58*s.*, and the duty 15*s.* or 14*s.* a quarter. Thus the corn barometer points to fair, while the ship is bending under a storm.

This defect was pointed out many years ago by writers on the Corn Laws, and was urged upon the attention of the House of Commons when the present Act was under consideration.

But I confess that on the general subject my views have, in the course of twenty years, undergone a great alteration. I used to be of opinion that corn was an exception to the general rules of political economy; but observation and experience have convinced me that we ought to abstain from all interference with the supply of food. Neither a Government nor a Legislature can ever regulate the corn market with the beneficial effects which the entire freedom of sale and purchase are sure of themselves to produce.

I have for several years endeavoured to obtain a compromise on this subject. In 1839, I voted for a Committee of the whole House, with the view of supporting the substitution of a moderate fixed duty for the sliding scale. In 1841, I announced the intention of the then Government of proposing a fixed duty of 8*s.* a quarter. In the past Session I proposed the imposition of some lower duty. These propositions were successively rejected. The present First Lord of the Treasury met them in 1839, 1840, and 1841, by eloquent panegyrics on the existing system—the plenty it had caused, the rural happiness it had diffused. He met the propositions for diminished protection in the same way in which he had met the offer of securities for Protestant interests in 1817 and 1825 — in the same way in which he met the proposal to allow Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham to send Members to Parliament in 1830.

The result of resistance to qualified concessions must be the same in the present instance as in those I have mentioned. It is no longer worth while to contend for a fixed duty. In 1841 the free-trade party would have agreed to a duty of 8*s.* a quarter on wheat, and, after a lapse of years, this duty might have been further reduced, and ultimately abolished. But the imposition of any duty at present, without a provision for its extinction within a short period, would but prolong a contest already sufficiently fruitful of animosity and discontent. The struggle to make bread scarce and dear, when it is clear that part, at least, of the additional price goes to increase rent, is a struggle deeply injurious to an aristocracy which (this quarrel once removed) is strong in property, strong in the construction of our Legislature, strong in opinion, strong in ancient associations and the memory of immortal services.

Let us, then, unite to put an end to a system which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people.

But if this end is to be achieved, it must be gained by the unequivocal expression of the public voice. It is not to be denied that many elections for cities and towns in 1841, and some in 1845, appear to favour the assertion that free trade is not popular with the great mass of the community. The Government appear to be waiting for some excuse to give up the present Corn Law. Let the people, by petition, by address, by remonstrance, afford them the excuse they seek. Let the Ministry propose such a revision of the taxes as in their opinion may render the public burdens more just and more equal; let them add any other provisions which caution, and even scrupulous forbearance, may suggest; but let the removal of restrictions on the admission of the main articles of food and clothing used by the mass of the people be required, in plain terms, as useful to all great interests, and indispensable to the progress of the nation.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

J. RUSSELL.

Edinburgh, Nov. 22.

selves what are the circumstances which require one so able, and one so eminent to enter upon the vindication of himself, and to rise in this House, amid the cheers of his former opponents, to place himself in a position of an apologetical character to those who were once of his own party? I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman has arrived at a conscientious conclusion on this great subject. The right hon. Gentleman says, that it is not so much by force of argument, as by the cogency of observation that he has arrived at this conclusion. But, Sir, surely the observation which the right hon. Gentleman has made, might have been made when he filled a post scarcely less considerable than that which he now occupies, and enjoyed power scarcely less ample than that which he now wields in this House. I want to know how it is that the right hon. Gentleman, who certainly enjoys the full maturity of manhood, should not have arrived at this opinion, which I deplore, although conscientious, at the moment when his present Government was formed? What, Sir, are we to think of the eminent statesman, who, having served under four Sovereigns, unable to complain of want of experience or Royal confidence—who, having been called on to steer the ship on so many occasions, and under such perilous circumstances, has, only during the last three years, found it necessary entirely to change his convictions on that important topic which must have presented itself for more than a quarter of a century to his consideration? Sir, I must say that such a Minister may be conscientious, but that he is unfortunate. I will say also, that he ought to be the last man in the world to turn round and upbraid his party in a tone of menace. Sir, there is a difficulty in finding a parallel to the position of the right hon. Gentleman in any part of history. The only parallel which I can find is an incident in the late war in the Levant, which was terminated by the policy of the noble Lord opposite. I remember when that great struggle was taking place, when the existence of the Turkish empire was at stake, the late Sultan, a man of great energy and fertile in resources, was determined to fit out an immense fleet to maintain his empire. Accordingly a vast armament was collected. It consisted of many of the finest ships that were ever built. The crews were picked men, the officers were the ablest that could be found, and both officers and men were rewarded before they fought. There never was an armament which left the Dardanelles similarly appointed since the days of Solyman the Great. The Sultan personally witnessed the departure of the fleet; all the muftis prayed for the success of the expedition, as all the muftis here prayed for the success of the last general election. Away went the fleet; but what was the Sultan's consternation, when the lord high admiral steered at once into the enemy's port! Now Sir, the lord high admiral on that occasion was very much misrepresented. He, too, was called a traitor, and he, too vindicated himself. "True it is," said he, "I did place myself at the head of this valiant armada—true it is that my Sovereign embraced me—true it is that all the muftis in the empire offered up prayers for my success; but I have an objection to war. I see no use in prolonging the struggle, and the only reason I had for accepting the command, was that I might terminate the contest by betraying my master." And, Sir, these reasons offered by a man of great plausibility, of vast adroitness, have had their effect, for—you may be surprised at it—but I assure you it is a fact, which by the way, the gallant officer opposite (Commodore Napier) can testify, that he is at this moment the First Lord of the Admiralty at Constantinople, under the new reign. [SIR C. NAPIER: I thought he was dead.] The gallant Commodore says that he is dead. At any rate he was not shot for treason. Well now, the right hon. Gentleman has turned round on us, and in a peroration, the elaborate character of which remarkably contrasted with the garrulous confidence of all the doings of his Cabinet, the right hon. Gentleman told us that he had been assured that a certain power had made him Minister, and that a certain power would prevent him from being a Minister; but that he protested against such an authority, and that he never would hold office by so servile a tenure. Sir, no one can fill a position such as that of the right hon. Gentleman, and give utterance to sentiments so magnanimous as his without reference to antecedents. And that leads us to the consideration of that Government by parties which must never be lost sight of in estimating the position of the right hon. Gentleman. It is all very well for the right hon. Gentleman to say "I am the First Minister;"—and, by the by, I think the right hon. Gentleman might as well at

onee adopt the phraseology of Walpole, and call himself the sole Minister, for his speech was rich in egotistic rhetoric;—it is all very well for him to speak of himself as the sole Minister, for as all his Cabinet voted against him, he is quite right not to notice them. I repeat, it is all very well for the right hon. Gentleman to come forward to this table and say—"I am thinking of posterity, although, certainly, I am doing on this side of the table the contrary to that which I counselled when I stood upon the other; but my sentiments are magnanimous, my aim is heroic, and, appealing to posterity, I care neither for your cheers nor your taunts." But, Sir, we must ask ourselves—as Members of the House of Commons, as the subjects of a popular Government, we must ask ourselves—what were the means, what the machinery, by which the right hon. Gentleman acquired his position, how he obtained power to turn round upon his supporters, and to treat them with contempt and disdain? Sir, the right hon. Gentleman has supported a different policy for a number of years. Well do we remember on this side of the House—perhaps not without a blush—well do we remember the efforts which we made to raise him to the bench on which he now sits. Who does not remember the "sacred cause of protection," the cause for which Sovereigns were thwarted—Parliaments dissolved—and a nation taken in! Delightful, indeed, to have the right hon. Gentleman entering into all his confidential details, when, to use his courtly language, he "called" upon his Sovereign. Sir, he called on his Sovereign; but would his Sovereign have called on the right hon. Baronet, if, in 1841, he had not placed himself, as he said, at the head of the gentlemen of England? that well-known position, to be preferred even to the confidence of Sovereigns and of courts. It is all very well for the right hon. Baronet to take this highflying course; but I think myself—I say it with great respect for Gentlemen on this side of the House, and Gentlemen on the other; I say it without any wish to achieve a party triumph, for I believe I belong to a party which can triumph no more; for we have nothing left on our side except the constituencies which we have not betrayed; but I do say that my conception of a great statesman is of one who represents a great idea—an idea which may lead him to power—an idea with which he may identify himself—an idea which he may develop—an idea which he may and can impress on the mind and conscience of a nation. That, Sir, is my notion of what makes a man a great statesman. I do not care whether he be a manufacturer or a manufacturer's son. That is a grand—that is indeed an heroic position. But I care not what may be the position of a man who never originates an idea—a watcher of the atmosphere—a man who, as he says, takes his observations, and when he finds the wind in a certain quarter trims to suit it. Such a person may be a powerful minister, but he is no more a great statesman than the man who gets up behind a carriage is a great whip. Both are disciples of progress. Both, perhaps, may get a good place. But how far the original momentum is indebted to their powers, and how far their guiding prudence regulates the lash or the rein, it is not necessary for me to notice. Why, Sir, the right hon. Gentleman places himself in the House in this position. He tells us that he has held high office under four Sovereigns, "George III., George IV., King William, and Queen Victoria." His historic career—for it amounts to that—is, that he has served four Sovereigns—it is his own recommendation. It is as much as to say—"I am able and experienced—the Grandfather of our present Sovereign trusted me—a Regent and a King trusted me—a King in a revolution trusted me—a Conservative Sovereign trusted me. I must be wise, and able, and experienced." He tells you this as his recommendation, and he adds, "Follow me." Follow him!—Who is to follow him, or why is anybody to follow him—or where is anybody to follow him to? What does he mean to do—this great statesman, who talks with a sneer of an "ancient monarchy," and a "proud aristocracy," and the difficulty of reconciling them with a reformed constituency; and who tells us that we are but drags on the wheel, and that he is the only driver. Have we arrived at that? Is that the opinion of the majority of this House, or even of the minority—of the majority of the country, or even of the minority? Is it their opinion that ancient monarchies and proud aristocracies are inconvenient lumber, to be got rid of on the first convenient opportunity—that they are things irreconcileable with a reformed constituency, reformed under this Minister's own protest, in spite of his own protest, this man who comes forward and tells us he is devoting himself to his

country, and sacrificing himself to his Sovereign, and that he is the only man who can advise you what counsel it is most expedient for you to pursue? He tells us that he is still purely Conservative: for, asks he, "has not my administration put down agitation?" Sir, I confess when I heard this, that great as undoubtedly are the powers of Parliamentary face of the right hon. Gentleman—I confess, Sir, that I was thunderstruck. I could forget the agitated councils called without a cause, and dismissed without a consequence—the candid explanation of the situation of his Cabinet—his admission that the only man in that body who dared to speak the truth differed from him; the almost humble confession that in spite of Lyon Playfair, and Professor Lindley, he had been misled in his information; that his viceroy, who being a diplomatist, communicated his principal information in a postscript, had caused such false impressions in the Cabinet; that the Secretary of State was obliged to send a courier for an explanation: all these frank details I could afford to admire in one who has taken up so lofty a position as the right hon. Baronet says he has taken, and who can afford to speak truth; but really when he told us that his Conservative Administration had put down agitation, when he said this in the face of the hon. Member for Stockport, in the face of the hon. Member for Durham, then, Sir, I confess, that the right hon. Baronet did manage to achieve the first great quality of oratory, that he did succeed in making an impression on his audience! Put down agitation! Will he rise and deny that he is legislating or about to legislate with direct reference to agitation? What other excuses has he—for even his mouldy potatoes have failed him, even the reports of his vagrant professors have failed him—to induce the noble Representative of South Lancashire, and the hon. Representative of Yorkshire, to come forward and stand his bail? Sir, I remember, in the midst of a great revolution, when all the principles of our social system were called into question—when we heard much of the inconvenience of ancient monarchies and proud aristocracies—when it was necessary to invent some means, to devise some expedient to manage reformed constituencies—well do I remember that great mind, which was to control divided counsels—to guide a distracted people, delivering itself of that oracle, which rung so solemnly over the land, "Register, register, register." Register, some thought, to save the Corn Laws; some to save the Monarchy; some to save the Church. We went on registering; and the right hon. Gentleman went on making protection speeches—a great orator before a green table beating a red box. Then he showed us the sovereign passion—we were to register to make him a Minister. The statesman who opposed Catholic Emancipation against arguments as cogent as any which the gentlemen of the League can now offer—in spite of political expediency a thousand times more urgent than that which now besets them—always ready with his arguments and amendments—always ready with his fallacies ten thousand times exploded—always ready with his Virgilian quotations to command a cheer—the moment that an hon. and learned Gentleman was returned for the county of Clare, then immediately we saw this right hon. Gentleman not ashamed to recall his arguments—not ashamed to confess that he was convinced; but telling us, on the contrary, that he should be ashamed if he had not the courage to come forward and propose a resolution exactly contrary to his previous policy. And so is it always with the right hon. Gentleman. Nursed in the House of Commons, entertaining no idea but that of Parliamentary success, if you wish to touch him to the quick, you must touch him on the state of the poll. The moment that he heard of South Lancashire being lost—by means respecting which I will not, at this moment, say anything—the moment he heard that Yorkshire was in danger—the right hon. Baronet—the Minister who has served four Sovereigns—the Gentleman who has had the question of protection before his official mind in every shape which ingenuity could devise, during his Parliamentary career of a quarter of a century—this Gentleman suddenly finds that the arguments in favour of protection to native industry are not, after all, so cogent as he once thought them; he discovers that the principle of protection cannot be supported; and, having arrived at this conclusion, then, with all the debating dexterity—with all the Parliamentary adroitness he possesses, he comes forward—he has the sublime audacity to come forward and confess that at his ripe age he is convinced by arguments the very same we have heard for the last thirty years: and, greater triumph still, he has the Parliamentary tact to convince most of his supporters that he

is sincere. Sir, I give the right hon. Gentleman full credit—I admire his Parliamentary powers—I admit them—I appreciate them; but it is really too much for a Minister who has led such a career—who offers us such arguments—who tells us, in effect, that it is not intellect which should govern—that it is not great and true ideas which should govern; but that it is the state of the registration, and the accident of the poll—it is, I repeat, too much for such a man to come forward and talk to us in high-pitched language about his lofty spirit, about his determination never to be the tool of those of whom, when in opposition, he was, by the by, the very ready counsellor — to come forward and say that he is but thinking of posterity —that he is touched by the love of fame, the noblest of all aspirations, and which alone constitutes the highest reward for his great toils. What an advantage to a country to be governed by a Minister who thinks only of posterity! The right hon. Gentleman has before assured us that he and his Colleagues are only thinking of "the future." Who can doubt it? Look at them. Throw your eyes over the Treasury Bench. See stamped on each ingenuous front, "the last infirmity of noble mind." They are all of them, as Spenser says, "imps of fame." They are just the men in the House you would fix upon as thinking only of posterity. The only thing is, when one looks at them, seeing of what they are composed, one is hardly certain whether "the future," of which they are thinking, is indeed posterity, or only the coming quarter day! I should like to know what posterity may think of a Cabinet which resigns office because it cannot support a policy, and accepts office for the same reason. In the history of England—in the history of parties, I defy any man — I defy even the right hon. Member for Edinburgh, with his disciplined memory, and cultivated mind—I defy any man learned in British history, to adduce me a case parallel to this. And what is to be the result? If "coming events cast their shadows before," I suppose no Gentleman in a sane state of mind can doubt it. We resisted the moderate proposal of the Whigs. We rejected it, confiding in the experience of that practised individual —the Gentleman who has served four Sovereigns. We were blind enough to believe, that a Gentleman of such great ability—of such long experience—who had had such immense advantages, could not make very gross and palpable blunders. We accepted him for a leader to accomplish the triumph of protection; and now we are to attend the catastrophe of protection. Of course the Whigs will be the chief mourners. They cannot but weep for their innocent, although it was an abortion; but ours was a fine child. Who can forget how its nurse dandled it, fondled it? What a charming babe! Delicious little thing! so thriving! Did you ever see such a beauty for its years? This was the tone, the innocent prattle. And then the nurse, in a fit of patriotic frenzy, dashes its brains out, and comes down to give master and mistress an account of this terrible murder. The nurse, too, a person of a very orderly demeanour; not given to drink; and never showing any emotion except of late, when kicking against protection. How ungrateful! For, God knows, we were more than obedient—we were servile. But how is it now? The most valuable Colleague of the right hon. Gentleman—I say so for good reasons—has protested against him. Lord Stanley, who when the right hon. Baronet was in opposition was the great adhesion that was to make Conservative principles triumphant—he, if I have not been misinformed by some one too zealous to hear aright, for I have not had the advantage of hearing that noble Lord's speech to-night in another place—but I am told that that noble Lord has stated that he quitted the Ministry because he found they were leaving the principles upon which they obtained the confidence of Parliament. I say the confidence of Parliament. I am not one of those who have ever exaggerated the character, the powers, the privileges of Parliament, or of either separate House; but, after all, is it or is it not the Constitution of the country? I want to know what leading man dare rise in this House—I care not on which side he sits —who will for a moment pretend that he has gained the position he occupies except by the confidence of Parliament? It is very well to come to us with stories about his Sovereign, and about posterity, but where would the right hon. Baronet have been if the House of Commons had not existed? Now, I say it is utterly impossible to carry on your Parliamentary Constitution except by political parties. I say there must be distinct principles as lines of conduct adopted by public men. Away with your talk about going down to Windsor, and finding that Lord John This, or

Lord William That, cannot form a Ministry, and saying, "Then I must form one, and bring all my Colleagues to support measures that they entirely disapprove;"—is that the Constitution that governs England? If the Constitution that governs England be a Constitution that makes men recommend that of which they do not approve, then the sooner we get rid of this Constitution the better. It comes to that; and the noble Lord opposite, the Member for London, who has a respect for the Parliamentary Constitution, and who represents a party that are nothing if they do not respect a Parliamentary Constitution, ought to resist such a vulgar, ignoble innovation. I can understand an absolute Sovereign, in a country of high civilization, governing through a Council of State selected by her arbitrary but intelligent will, from the ablest men of the country; but we have a Parliamentary Constitution. It may have committed great wrongs: undoubtedly it has achieved immense and magnificent results; but this House of Commons still forms a part of the Constitution, though how degraded and demoralized it may become, if the principles we have heard to-night are to be acknowledged, I confess I cannot tell. If the principles advocated by the right hon. Baronet to-night be once admitted, I ask any one capable of forming an opinion upon public questions, whether Parliament can be anything but a servile senate? Six hundred men met together without the sympathy of great principles and great ideas, to wield all the power of a country, with all the patronage of the country, at the command of one man appointed by the Sovereign to direct them as he wills,—who can doubt what the result would be? In a neighbouring country, yet in the infancy of its representative system, and therefore to be looked at in a kind apologetic spirit, they have no Parliamentary parties; and at this moment, while we are talking of the danger of the Napoleonists and the republicans, the danger is a corrupted senate—an assembly professing to represent the people, and wielding all their power, at the command of a single individual. Do you aspire to such a position? You will not be brought to this. But what may you in the interval have to pass through? If you had a daring, dashing Minister, a Danby or a Walpole, who tells you frankly, "I am corrupt, and I wish you to be corrupt also," we might guard against this; but what I cannot endure is to hear a man come down and say, "I will rule without respect of party, though I rose by party; and I care not for your judgment, for I look to posterity." Sir, very few people reach posterity. Who amongst us may arrive at that destination I presume not to vaticinate. Posterity is a most limited assembly. Those gentlemen who reach posterity are not much more numerous than the planets. But one thing is quite evident, that while we are appealing to posterity—while we are admitting the principles of relaxed commerce—there is extreme danger of our admitting the principles of relaxed politics. I advise, therefore, that we all, whatever may be our opinions about free trade, oppose the introduction of free politics. Let men stand by the principle by which they rise—right or wrong. I make no exception. If they be in the wrong, they must retire to that shade of private life with which our present rulers have often threatened us. There are always men ready to form a Government; and if the noble Lord had formed one, and the country would not support free trade, that would not show that his principles were wrong; but it would show a great political fact, important in the state of our country, that the nation was not ripe for those opinions, or that it was against them. This is a legitimate thing; but it is not a legitimate trial of the principles of free trade against the principle of protection, if a Parliament, the majority of which are elected to support protection, be gained over to free trade by the arts of the very individual whom they were elected to support in an opposite career. It is not fair to the people of England. As for whether the right hon. Baronet made the Conservative party, or the party made him, I have no doubt there was a reciprocal influence; but he is a great Parliamentary leader, and undoubtedly we might, with a leader less able, not have gained such a result as we did. I attribute our success at the last election in some degree to the impolicy of the Whigs: warmly opposed to them as I am, I may say that, though I wish to say nothing against Gentlemen who happen to be in adversity; but if the right hon. Baronet had not led us so many years with most adroit ability—if, during that term, he had not had recourse to all the acts of party—if he had not proposed subtle resolutions, and, even if necessary, Amendments on the Address—if he had not

with a frankness unusual to him, expressed principles to which the country responded, would he have been carried into power by an enthusiastic people? Then how can you, the Opposition, if you are for Parliamentary Government, offer him this adulation because he now supports your views? You may be very glad that an eminent Member of the House is on your side—that is an historical fact which you may register, and adduce it in evidence of the truth of your views and the advance of your cause; but depend upon it you err when you admit the principle that you are to support any man, whoever he may be, who supports your opinions. The Minister who attained as he did the position which the right hon. Baronet now fills, is not the Minister who ought to abrogate the Corn Laws. That feeling is, I believe, not confined to this House. Whatever may be the fate of Government—whether we are to have a Whig Administration or a Conservative—whether the noble Lord or the right hon. Gentleman is to guide the sceptre of the State—whatever, I say, may be the fate of Cabinets—and they are transitory and transient things—things which may not survive the career of many men in this House—on Parliament, as an institution, and still a popular institution in this country, is dependent, and not upon the Government, the consideration of the vast majority of the Members of this House. Do not, then, because you see a great personage giving up his opinions, do not cheer him on—do not yield so ready a reward to political tergiversation. Above all, maintain the line of demarcation between parties; for it is only by maintaining the independence of party that you can maintain the integrity of public men, and the power and influence of Parliament itself.

Viscount NORTHLAND said, he could only interpret Sir R. Peel's speech as indicating a total repeal of the Corn Laws. He must protest, in the name of the people of Ireland, against such a proposal. If the right hon. Gentleman wished to make the condition of Ireland even worse than it now was, a proposal for the total repeal of the Corn Laws was the most direct means for effecting his object. Ireland was an agricultural country; and if the gentry of that country were ruined, what, he should like to know, would become of the agricultural labourer? It was well known Ireland had no manufactures. He certainly expected that some Member, on one side or the other, from Ireland would have risen to protest against the course which the right hon. Gentleman seemed to indicate. He did not rise to propose an Amendment, but he thought it right to express his regret at the apparent intentions of the Government.

Mr. MILES found it impossible to allow the debate to terminate without saying a few words. First of all, he cordially agreed with the right hon. Baronet that no Amendment ought to be moved to the Address; but he wished it to be understood, and the public to know, that it should not on that account be inferred that he concurred in the principle now declared by the right hon. Gentleman. He never listened with more surprise and regret to any speech than that of the right hon. Gentleman that night. The right hon. Gentleman had cast reflections on his own supporters, though they were mixed up, certainly, with some words of kindness; but an unfavourable impression as to his own party was conveyed in that sarcastic way which the right hon. Gentleman so well knew how to adopt. He must ask the right hon. Gentleman a question, which he was the more emboldened to put after the admirable speech of his hon. Friend (Mr. Disraeli)—whether they, the Conservatives, returned in 1841 to support the right hon. Gentleman in a particular policy, were now to be called on to abandon that policy, and thus place themselves on the lowest seat of ignominy? What had become of the right hon. and noble Members of the Cabinet who first of all opposed the proposal of the right hon. Gentleman? Was there no public spirit, no enthusiasm, no recollection—he should not say of pledges, but of implied opinions, given at the hustings? And when the right hon. Gentleman, with the ingenuity which belonged to him, brought forward a proposition to which the majority of his Cabinet were decidedly opposed, were the other Members of that Cabinet to sacrifice every thing at the feet of their idol? If determined on that course, why not return the power vested in their hands to their constituencies, and see whether they would sanction such conduct? It was a high constitutional question, as argued by his hon. Friend (Mr. Disraeli), that they should have a certain sound basis as the foundation of party in that House; and he did not see how, in the present state of things, public principle could be upheld, except by taking that course which every constitutional Minister

was bound to adopt, and appealing to the people who formerly placed him at the head of so large a majority. He called on the repealers of the Corn Laws to urge that view. He hoped and trusted that he should have the adhesion of many of those hon. Gentlemen in submitting that the fair proposition to be placed before the country was—"Protection, or No Protection." This was the broad basis on which the next Government must be formed. And he thought the people had a right to demand that previously to any change being effected in the law of 1842 (which was looked on as a contract as well as a compromise), they should be appealed to, in order to see whether they would again return a majority purely Conservative, or select Members of the same views as those of the hon. Member for Stockport, who so gallantly opposed the agriculturists in every possible way. Before he sat down he must allude to the statement of the noble Lord (Lord John Russell), accusing the agricultural party of want of forethought, and that they cared little for the possible future failure of the potato crop in Ireland. Now, he must vindicate the English farmers from such an imputation; for no man with the slightest spark of humanity but must have been touched, when the accounts in September, October, and the beginning of November reached this country, by the apprehension of famine reaching millions of the people of Ireland. The question then arose what should a Constitutional Minister do who was placed at the head of a great party, and had thereby the means of testing the accuracy of the accounts which reached this country. He had the pleasure at the period to which he had alluded of presiding over a large company of tenant farmers, and he put to them, as fairly as he could, that, if the right hon. Gentleman discovered from his sources of information, that Ireland was jeopardised by the state of the potato crop, and that famine was likely to ensue, not then, but in the spring, he asked them, in such a case, whether the right hon. Gentleman would not be justified in throwing open the ports. The proposal was met with the most enthusiastic applause. So little were the tenant farmers of England egotists or monopolists. The right hon. Gentleman said that, on the 25th of November, a proposition was made to the Cabinet for throwing open the ports, but there was tacked to this a proposal for an alteration in the Corn Laws. Now the country had a right to expect that the Minister who carried the Corn Law of 1842, and which had worked beyond his most sanguine expectations, would have remained firm to its principle, and not abandoned it because of the occurrence of a temporary evil. The country must not be deceived because of no division that night. It was now apparent that not only the agricultural body, but all classes of native industry, were to be attacked—that the protection against foreigners, on which they had a right to rely, was to be rendered almost useless—and that this question was to be discussed on Monday or Tuesday next. He would venture to say there were many hon. Members in that House not connected with the Government, who would give any such proposal the strongest constitutional opposition, and throw every impediment they could in the way of any such measures. He hoped, however, that the right hon. Gentleman having deliberately proposed his plan, would at once appeal to the final tribunal of decision—the people.

COLONEL SIBTHORP was neither surprised nor deceived by the course proposed to be pursued by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, for he had so often been deceived by him on important questions of religion as well as of agriculture, that he was determined to be deceived no more. If any surprise was left on his mind at all, it was that the right hon. Baronet had not gone over before this, and joined the ignominious band of Corn-Law Leaguers. He had once said in that House, that the right hon. Baronet was the only man to save the country; but he now distinctly asserted, that if there was one man more likely than another to destroy the country, it was the right hon. Baronet.

Address agreed to.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, January 23, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—1°. Public Works (Ireland).

PRIVATE BILLS.—[The Private Bills will be found in a Table at the end of the last volume of the Session.]

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Aldborough, and a great number of other places, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.—From Scarcliffe (North Devon Agricultural Protection Society), against Alteration of the Corn Laws.—From Sanquhar, for Remission of Sentence on Frost, Williams, and Jones.—From Free Colonists of Van Diemen's Land, for Reducing the number of Convicts, and for the Gradual and Total Abolition of Transportation to that Colony.

THE NELSON MONUMENT.

MR. COLLETT said, that seeing the noble Earl at the head of the Woods and Forests in his place, he wished to put a question to him in respect to Trafalgar-square, and certainly he could not but consider that the state of Trafalgar-square and the Nelson Monument, reflected rather on the office with which the noble Earl was connected. He understood that two or three years since a foreign despot—["Order!"] had been allowed to contribute a sum of 500*l.* towards the completion of the Nelson Monument; he understood that this foreign despot—[*Cries of* "Order,"]—well, then, this foreign hero—had been allowed to contribute 500*l.* towards what ought to be a national or public testimonial to the great Nelson. The question he wished to put to the noble Lord, was, whether, seeing the completion of this monument had been so long delayed, it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to complete it—and if so, when that desired consummation would be achieved?

The EARL of LINCOLN: The House would recollect that the monument was originally intended to be raised and completed at the expense of a number of individuals, who subscribed their money for that purpose. The funds raised subsequently proving to be utterly inadequate for the purposes intended, the monument remained unfinished, and about a year and a half ago Her Majesty's Government undertook to complete the work; and the hon. Gentleman would recollect that in the Session before last a Supplementary Vote was proposed and granted for this purpose, and contracts had been entered into for the completion of the design with Messrs. Cubitt; but the material being of granite, there had been a difficulty in finishing the work in the required time. With regard to the intended works of art on the base of the pillar, he had, with the consent of his right hon. Friend, placed the matter in the hands of several eminent artists for their consideration. He could only assure the hon. Gentleman, that since the Government had taken up the matter, there had been no time lost.

SESSIONAL ORDERS.

MR. CARDWELL moved the adoption of the usual Sessional Orders, which were read *seriatim* from the Chair.

On coming to that which declares it a breach of the privileges of the House for Peers to interfere with or influence the election of Members to serve in the House of Commons,

MR. WILLIAMS thought it necessary to remark that that Sessional Order came before the House annually, and yet the House had taken no steps to carry out their own Standing Order. Before they passed it they should see how far their privileges were infringed upon in the point to which it referred, and take some steps for the purpose of enforcing their orders. It was notorious to every well-informed man in the country, that they were continually and regularly violated. It was well known that in that House there were many Members elected by the influence of Peers. In many counties there were three or four influential Peers possessing large estates; and any man of information could tell how the elections would turn by knowing what candidates these Peers would support. Last night, Gentlemen who had spoken against the propositions of Her Majesty's Government threw out a challenge to go to a general election by way of testing the opinions of the country. How did they expect to carry out their intentions of gaining strength in that House except by the influence of the Peers? They well knew that without the Peers, they could not hope to defeat the Government. They well knew that the whole mass of the people of the country would support at a general election the liberal propositions made by Her Majesty's Government. For the sake of the character of the House they should not pass those Sessional Orders, without taking some measures for enforcing them when it was so well known that they were continually violated.

SIR R. INGLIS: The House had from time to time passed the rules to which the hon. Gentleman had referred, to prevent a Peer from interfering with the election of Members of Parliament; but the hon. Gentleman was not content with objecting to the proposition as voted, but wished to prevent, by more stringent means, the still further interference of noblemen with the election of Members of Parliament. Was he prepared to disfranchise a Peer of that hereditary right which he enjoyed in common with his fellow subjects, of voting for the election of Members of Parliament? Was he prepared to establish a maximum scale, and to say that a large landowner ought not to interfere with elections, and that this privilege should be left to the 40*s.* freeholder created by the Reform Bill? The hon. Member ought to recollect that the

privilege which he desired to neutralise, so far as one part of the community was concerned, was conferred by that very Act to which the Members of that House owed their seats. The hon. Member should have endeavoured to procure the abrogation of the principle when the Reform Bill was under discussion. The hon. Member wished to go much further than the Sessional Orders, and prevent every landowner from interfering in any way with elections—a rule which, considering their great stake, would be both arbitrary and unjust. He might not see sufficient reason for retaining the Order, but he saw no reason at all why it should now be either abrogated or rendered more stringent.

Order agreed to.

On the reading of that regulating the nights for Government and Private Business,

MR. WILLIAMS objected to the proposed arrangement. On the Wednesday nights the business was open to Members generally, and Bills were taken in their various stages. Motions on the Wednesdays were taken in the order in which they appeared upon the Paper, whilst on the contrary, on the nights of which Government had the control, when there frequently appeared thirty or forty Notices, any Member of the Government might upset the order, and bring any one he chose forward first. He might take the first order last, or the last first. That was a very great inconvenience to the Members of the House. He himself had often waited until three o'clock in the morning for his turn, and if he chanced to turn his back or leave the House for a moment, his business might be called on and passed by. What he had to suggest was, that Her Majesty's Government should consent to take the Orders of the Day on Mondays and Fridays in the order in which they stood upon the list. He was aware of the difficulties which surrounded the right hon. Baronet opposite in regulating the Orders; but if they were taken in rotation, he thought it would tend to the great convenience of the House.

SIR ROBERT PEEL thought that the course hitherto adhered to was the best. There were frequently thirty or forty Orders of the Day on the list, and they could not adopt the course of taking them in the order in which they stood. It would be impossible to set them down in the order in which they should be taken; but he would have no objection to stating, on the day before that for which they stood, which of the list the Government wished to give precedence to, as he was desirous of giving every possible facility.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL observed, that the course adopted by him was always to give notice of the Orders of the Day which should take precedence. He thought it would not be a good arrangement if the Government were obliged to take the Orders in the course in which they were set down; for it then might happen that the one for the advancement of which there was no pressing necessity for despatch, might be brought on, whilst some measure of much greater interest and consequence would be left by. He had no observation to make upon the Order, except to suggest that during the ensuing Session on Wednesdays the House should sit at twelve o'clock in the day for the despatch of business. There would then be a greater likelihood that they would have an attendance of Members than in the evening.

SIR ROBERT PEEL had expressed a wish, in the course of the last Session, that the course proposed by the noble Lord who had just sat down should be adopted. He wished the House to sit from twelve o'clock to six. He thought that such an arrangement would be the best.

MR. WAKLEY must say that he thought the arrangement most objectionable; and nothing could be more unwise or more likely to be detrimental to the public interest. If he understood the arrangement correctly, independent Members of the House, who had measures to advance which were not supported by the Government, or in which the Government were not interested, were to assemble on a Wednesday at twelve o'clock, and pursue their labours until six in the evening; and after that period the Government were to be at liberty to bring in their measures. Then he was to understand that the House would rise at six. And the usual dinners were to be enjoyed after that hour.

SIR R. H. INGLIS objected to the proposed arrangement on many grounds. He understood that from twelve to six on Wednesdays was to be devoted to Private Business, or rather business that was not connected with the Government. Now his noble Friend had, within the last half-hour, given notice of one of the most important Motions which could be brought under the consideration of the House; and if it was the intention of Ministers to absent themselves from the House on a Wednesday,

such important Motions as those, for instance, with respect to charitable endowments, might be brought on and disposed of in their absence, and the question decided when, perhaps, there would not be more than forty Members present. For this and for other reasons, he certainly objected to any alterations being made in the existing Sessional Order.

SIR ROBERT PEEL did not see why it should be supposed that the Members of Her Majesty's Government would be necessarily absent. He believed that no hon. Member of the House had been more regularly in attendance than his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department; and in case of a Motion of the importance alluded to by the hon. Baronet being brought forward, the Members of Her Majesty's Government would certainly take care to be present.

Resolution agreed to.

RAILWAY DEPOSITS.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL: I will take this opportunity of asking a question of the right hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with respect to the mode in which the provisions of the Act 1 and 2 Victoria, regarding Railways, are to be carried into effect. The deposits required to be paid upon such undertakings are, by the Orders and Resolutions of this House, shortly to be paid into the Bank of England to the credit of the Accountant-General, and it is required that the payment be made in money. Last year the sum so paid in amounted to three millions. It is expected that this year the sum will be as high as nine millions; and apprehensions have been expressed, that the payment of so large a sum together must cause considerable inconvenience in the money market; and that apprehension has already made great difference with regard to the time for which money is advanced for commercial purposes. I do not wish to express any opinion whether any measures might be taken to arrange the matter; but I think it desirable that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should state clearly, not only his views upon the subject, but what he intends to do, and also his reasons for those intentions. I beg to know if the right hon. Gentleman proposes to introduce any plan to alter the existing law?

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Sir, I feel extremely obliged to the noble Lord for giving me the opportunity, if any doubt could exist after what has passed between myself and the individuals who have consulted me on the subject, of removing any doubt from the public mind, as to the course which the Government propose to take with respect to the payment of railway deposits. The House is aware that by a Standing Order of this House, all persons who have embarked in a railway are bound to make a deposit, previous to the presentation of their petition, of one-tenth upon three-fourths of the whole expense of the undertaking; and that, by an Act of Parliament passed in an antecedent Session, the parties who make that deposit have the right of having it invested by the Accountant-General in such Government securities as they think fit. About the middle of November last, an application was made to me by a very respectable party in the city of London, who represented that it was absolutely necessary at that particular period, that a definite answer should be given as to the course which the Government intended to pursue at the opening of the Session, with respect to the repeal or alteration of that Standing Order; and the proposal then made to me was (and it was described as essential to the security of the commercial interest), that the Government should propose, at the commencement of the Session, an alteration of the Resolution which should allow either Exchequer Bills, or Stock, or India Bonds, or Private Bills of Exchange, to be received in lieu of money, as directed by the Act of Parliament and the Orders of the House. It was represented to me, that it was essential to have the question then settled; because the question of discounts for a longer or shorter period materially depended upon the answer which might at that time be given. After due consideration, I stated that I did not feel authorized to give to the parties any assurance that there would be an alteration of the Standing Orders; and upon that resolution, so communicated to the party, I have every reason to believe that numbers of persons have acted, in making preparation for the payments which they may be called upon to make. Under these circumstances, I do not feel myself authorized to hold out any expectation to these parties, now that Parliament is assembled, that there will be, on my part, any proposal to alter the Standing Orders; nor should I be prepared to consent to it, if such a proposal were to be made by others. I have every reason to believe, that the apprehensions which are entertained upon this sub-

ject are not founded in fact, and that the difficulties which will arise in making the deposits have been greatly exaggerated; and I think it would be a bad reason for interfering with what has been long announced as the intention of Parliament with respect to railway deposits, and applicable, not merely to the present state of affairs, but those which may occur at other times, that because a difficulty has arisen from the extent of speculation, the Government should evince an anxiety to relieve some of the parties from embarrassments; especially when they are not calculated materially to affect the public interests. That is the ground on which I have refused to accede to the proposition.

LORD J. RUSSELL: I wish to explain that the question I put to the right hon. Gentleman, was not at all with a view to the benefit of parties deeply engaged in speculation, but to the guidance of others who may suffer inconvenience from the demand for money.

MR. MANGLES observed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed to have taken a one-sided view of the question. He appeared to think that parties engaged in railway speculations were the only persons interested in the matter, and that Government ought not to step forward to relieve them from the consequences of their own imprudence. The right hon. Gentleman forgot, or did not know, that the question affected the whole commerce of the country. He (Mr. Mangles) happened to know that within a few days some parties had found difficulties in obtaining the usual pecuniary accommodation, because those who granted such accommodation, under ordinary circumstances, would not part with their money in ignorance of what the coming crisis might produce. The real object in requiring the deposit of money, was to be certain that speculations in railways were really undertaken by parties who intended to carry them out; and, for the sake of arriving at that single fact, the whole commerce of the country was to be thrown into considerable embarrassment. He did not exaggerate the matter when he said that great commercial difficulty would be occasioned.

MR. MASTERMAN regretted that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had felt called upon to make such a statement. He had himself pressed upon the attention of Government, in the interview he had had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the inconvenience he was sure would be suffered by the community at large, not on behalf of railroad speculators, but of the commercial interest generally. By refusing to adopt what he (Mr. Masterman) had ventured to suggest, the right hon. Gentleman was not punishing railroad speculators, but preventing the commercial interest from obtaining legitimate accommodation. He could state, from his own knowledge of the money market, that considerable inconvenience had been already experienced; people had felt themselves obliged to save up their money, and accommodation had been either refused or only granted at a high rate of interest. He could have wished that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been able to give a more favourable answer, as much inconvenience would be felt within the next fourteen days.

QUEENS' SPEECH—REPORT OF ADDRESS.

LORD FRANCIS EGERTON appeared at the bar with the Report on the Address. It was brought up and read. On the Question that it be agreed to,

MR. COLQUHOUN said, that he must be permitted to ask for the indulgence of the House for a few minutes—not upon his own account, for he felt that he individually had no claim upon that indulgence—but because in what he should say, he knew he would be expressing the sentiments of others in that House as well as his own. And he would, in the first instance, clear the way by expressing the sentiments which he held upon one of the questions raised last night—the question of agricultural protection. His opinions upon that subject had always been moderate. He had twice voted with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, for inquiry into the Corn Laws; and he had done so with a view of obtaining and preserving a moderate yet a certain amount of protection to British agriculture. He had ever been desirous of reconciling the various classes and interests of the kingdom, and he knew that if protection were extravagant it could not be permanent. He might have been wrong in his opinions, but they had always been moderate; and having said thus much of his individual views upon the question of protection, he would not enter upon the points raised last night by the noble Lord the Member for South Lancashire, and by the right hon. Baronet. He confessed, however, that when he had heard some of their arguments, his fingers had itched to say a word as to their maxims of free trade.

One of the propositions laid down by the right hon. Baronet had related to wages. Now, the right hon. Baronet had become the disciple of the hon. Members for Wolverhampton and Stockport; and he certainly must suggest to them, as he had heard much abler arguments in favour of free trade from their lips, that they ought to indoctrinate their pupil somewhat better in its principles. It might be right to repeal the Corn Laws, but he begged of them not to repeal them upon wrong views of political science. The maxim of the right hon. Baronet to which he alluded, laid it down that wages had no connexion with the price of provisions. ["No, no!"] Yes, yes! He had taken down the words of the right hon. Baronet, who had stated, as broadly as he could, that wages had no connexion with the prices of provisions. Now, he had been for many years accustomed to read the works of œconomic philosophers, but this was a doctrine he could not find in any of their books—from Adam Smith down to Mr. Senior. And when the noble Lord the Member for South Lancashire had told them that the tillage of the soil was a manufacture, precisely the same as the textile manufactures of the country, he would have been glad to show him some points of difference, which a mind so intelligent and so candid must have admitted to be substantial. But, as he had promised, he would not enter into these questions; nor would he follow the right hon. Baronet into the argument upon the potatoes, which he delivered in so solemn and so dread a tone. Having, however, read a recent speech of the hon. Member for Stockport, addressed to the people of Manchester, he could not but express a hope that the anxiety of the right hon. Baronet would find some other source of consolation than that afforded by the repeal of the Corn Laws; for the hon. Member for Stockport had told the people of Manchester that now was the time to open the ports, and repeal the Corn Laws, for that now little corn could be got from abroad, as the whole of Europe was contending for the supplies of grain from America. If this were so, he, indeed, trusted that the right hon. Baronet's anxiety for the condition of the poor would be relieved by some other means, and that his arguments, as rotten as the potatoes, would be supported in another and a better way. He did not, however, rise to discuss that night the question of protection. That question would come on for discussion on Tuesday, and he was not desirous of anticipating the appointed hour. But he was anxious last night, if he had not been anticipated by his hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury, to have said a word as to the relations which existed between the Minister and his party, and as to the view which he and those around him took of the relation between a party and the Minister. The right hon. Baronet had talked much of the last three years. From the experience of those years the right hon. Baronet now drew all his political economy and his general politics. But he wished to go a little—and only a little—further back. The right hon. Baronet had craved permission that his helm should traverse freely. He would not be bound by his opinions of the year 1842. When he had sat in opposition, and had acted with the right hon. Baronet, he had looked upon him as an eminent and distinguished leader; and when the right hon. Baronet told them of the labour, the burdens, and the responsibility of office, no men could better appreciate that labour than they did who sat there and enjoyed the benefits of the right hon. Baronet's labours. So far from grudging public men the patronage, the honour, and the power incident to their high position, they constituted, in his opinion, but a small remuneration for the heavy responsibility, the fearful anxiety, and the wearing toil which official men underwent. And, being himself upon the shady side of forty, he rejoiced at and admired the conduct of those, whether on this or on that side of the House, who undertook the duties of office and performed them with the zeal, the ability, and the diligence of the right hon. Baronet. But he remembered, when the right hon. Baronet had sat upon the other side of the House, that he had been followed by his party, not for his abilities alone, but because he professed certain intelligible principles. Those principles had been—a strong attachment to the Church—a support of a national education in connexion with that Church—the defence of the aristocracy of England, which he had not then discovered to be a proud aristocracy—and a warm attachment to the Crown. He had not then found out that the system of an aristocracy and of a Crown were inconsistent with a reformed House of Commons. Another principle had been maintained by the right hon. Baronet at the time to which he had alluded. It was

a principle which he individually had held in moderation; but, as a party, they had all firmly maintained the necessity of agricultural protection. They had gone to the country upon these principles—principles recorded in the speeches of the right hon. Gentleman—speeches which now showed who had deserted their common ground. He, of course, could not say what pledges were binding upon the right hon. Gentleman, or what was the force which he attached to political obligations—under what circumstances he held them to be binding, and under what he allowed them to be relaxed. He must judge of these points for himself: but they must be permitted to judge of their own position, and to estimate the value of their principles to the country. The right hon. Baronet might have gone upon another issue—he might have said, "The noble Lord the Member for London is a worse manager than I am—the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Portsmouth sits fishing for a budget, and catches a deficit while I fill my Exchequer. The Colonies are in difficulties; the noble Lord the Member for London, with all his great talents, has changed from the Home Office to the Colonial in vain; I can manage the Home Office better than the noble Lord, and I can also manage the Colonies." The right hon. Baronet might have said—and here he would have been induced to agree with him—"I will rule the Foreign Department of the country in a manner more prudent and pacific than the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton." He might have added, "I am the most experienced statesman you can get—I am the most practised and skilful debater—I am the most industrious and able man of business—I have served four Sovereigns. Take me without a single principle recorded—take me as a skilful tactician—take me as a chartered libertine, or rather as a libertine without a charter." If he had said this, and had gone solely upon that issue; if the country and his party had joined him upon it, then indeed they would have had no cause to complain, and, having accepted him upon such terms, they would be wrong if they did not continue to support him. But for himself, and for his friends, he had never viewed things in that light. That was not the combination which they had formed. They might be wrong. Hon. Gentlemen opposite thought them bigoted and in error, mere fanatics in the cause of protection. Gentlemen opposite had a right to their opinions; they on his side of the House had also a right to theirs. But as the right hon. Baronet had gone to the country upon the principle of protection—as by this he had ensured support and obtained office, it was not a fair or upright course, without an appeal to the country, to abandon all those principles which had characterized them in opposition; but which they had left in the conduct of their Government. In these days of letter-writing, one epistle had proceeded, as hon. Gentlemen were aware, from the pen of the hon. Member for Montrose. The last month had been fertile in epistles; but the epistle of the hon. Member for Montrose had been characterized by the straightforward sense—and, in this instance, he was bound to add—by the manly intelligence which belonged to that hon. Gentleman. That hon. Gentleman was candid in his opinions. He said, "I want to upset the Church—I am opposed to you on that side of the House with regard to all questions civil and ecclesiastical—the matter is now a mere personal question, and I give it as my opinion that we shall get more from Peel than from Russell." But what appeared clear to the hon. Member for Montrose might also appear clear to them; and it might strike them that they would have a better chance of maintaining those institutions of which the right hon. Gentleman in opposition had been the advocate, by supporting the Whig instead of the Conservative Minister. They might be safer in the hands of the noble Lord than of the right hon. Gentleman. If the noble Lord was opposed to them, he was at least a gallant and a generous opponent. He at least would be straightforward. He would not have one profession for the country, and carry another principle into his Cabinet. He would not appeal to his veneration for the Church and his approval of protection, and then in office throw them overboard. The noble Lord would do none of these things; and the "memory of immortal services" would preserve his allegiance to institutions which he could not fail to venerate. But they were told that protection was gone—that their prospects were dark—and that it was better to take the measure of the right hon. Baronet, than the one still more sweeping which would be offered them by the noble Lord. With regard to the measure of the right hon. Baronet, he had heard great mystification. They had been urged to wait, to give the right hon. Gentleman a hearing—not to

condemn him until they were certain of his guilt. Now, with regard to the coming measure, he would venture a prophecy. That evening was Friday; the measure was to be brought forward on Tuesday. Yet he would venture to foretell the character of the coming measure. They might delude themselves as they pleased—it would be the same as the noble Lord's, a measure of absolute repeal. The right hon. Gentleman had only one card left to play. There might be—and, no doubt, there would be, much talk of compensation, many nice and balanced schemes; many fiscal alterations, a world of commercial change and official mystification; but, as affected the question between the manufacturer and the farmer, the result would be the same. [Mr. WAKLEY: The landlord.] Well, say the landlord; but he had observed that farmers were more in earnest on this question than landlords. He found many landlords doubtful. They wanted to kick over the traces. They sought for a free charter, free trade in political principle; but what he had looked upon with admiration was, not the conduct of the county Members, many of whom had been vacillating and subservient, but the way in which the English yeoman stuck to his opinions, and when the horses turned restive, laid the lash vigorously over them. Some of the county Members had said, "You don't know what will be done. We are not sure that any change is contemplated by Government." "What do you say to Mr. Gladstone's letter?" "We have not read it." But the English yeoman was not to be baffled: "You have nothing to do with the Government; leave the right hon. Baronet to play his own game! Tell us, do you mean to adhere to your pledges?" And therefore when he said, between the farmer and the manufacturer, he was right, and between the farmers and the manufacturers, he repeated that the question now hung. But it was evident that the Corn Laws were gone. The right hon. Baronet had not a card in his hand but one. He had been playing spades for a number of years. That suit was exhausted, he must now change and bring out the only card left, the knave of clubs. The noble Lord opposite might make fewer modifications, less of a general scheme, no mystification; but substantially the measure would be the same, come from which side of the House it might. So he did not see that they would be in greater danger from the noble Lord than from the right hon. Gentleman. But there were many persons who always said that the right hon. Baronet was a safe man, whilst, in their opinion, the noble Lord was rash, and given to revolutionary views. Now, if he were asked his opinion as to the right hon. Baronet, with respect to questions of finance, and also with regard to the foreign affairs of the country, he would agree with those who said that the right hon. Baronet was a safe man. With respect to those portions of his government, he certainly was deserving of confidence and support. The financial and foreign departments had been managed with great wisdom, great prudence, and, therefore, with great success. But he did not and could not think that the whole politics of the country were wrapped up in those two, undoubtedly important, departments. There were other departments of equal value. There were other matters of primary consequence. There were interests which touched the heart and affected the vital parts of their social system. It was on these matters that he did not think the right hon. Baronet a safe guide. He could not say what the right hon. Baronet might do for the future, but he could tell them what he had done in the past. In the stormy sea of present politics—and where was the man who would deny that the sea was stormy?—to those men who said that the right hon. Baronet was the pilot to weather the storm, he would turn and ask them to look back to his past services under the four Sovereigns of whom he had been the eminent Minister. He challenged the Members who sat upon the Treasury bench—every one of whom, in talents and position, were far more eminent than he could claim to be—to point out a single complex interest of which the right hon. Baronet had not at one time been the eminent champion, and which he had not afterwards abandoned. This was a matter of history. There was the Protestant interest. What became of that interest in the hands of the right hon. Baronet, who had been its noblest defender? First supported and then deserted. In 1835—the right hon. Member for Perth (Mr. Fox Maule), whom he saw before him, would remember it—in 1835 the right hon. Baronet had been the friend and champion of the Church of Scotland. In what condition—by what delays—by what deferring of measures—had that Church been stranded? The right hon. Gentleman had been the earnest, the zealous, the eloquent champion of protective

measures. He did not say that those measures could, under any circumstances, have continued; but since 1842 the right hon. Gentleman had not given them even a chance. The right hon. Baronet had, by avoiding discussion since he entered office, allowed the cause to go against them by default. Taunted by the hon. Member for Stockport—told that he was afraid to discuss the principle of protection—the right hon. Gentleman had contented himself with an attack upon the League—with a clever joke about the exhibitors of Covent Garden, he had never condescended to discuss those principles of political economy upon which, if upon any, protection could alone be maintained. [Sir ROBERT PEEL: Hear.] The right hon. Baronet cheered. Did he then mean to say that protection could not be defended on these grounds? If the right hon. Baronet meant this, he asked him—a man of high ability—of rare eloquence—of extensive experience—whether he knew in 1839, 1840, and in 1841, that there was no ground of political economy upon which protection could be supported? Whether he were then aware that its maintenance was nothing but the monstrous error of an ignorant and bigoted party? Were all his arguments then addressed to them a delusion? Were all his appeals to the farmer dishonest? Was all the declamation as to poor soils and impoverished labourers cast out and thrown off? Were these the arts of a rhetorician? Was the country stirred, counties inflamed, and country gentlemen alarmed, for none but party or personal objects? And did the right hon. Gentleman now say that all those elaborate arguments—appealing to the passions of men—exciting panic and party feeling—were used by him while he knew them to be unsound? Was that his defence? If it was not, if the right hon. Gentleman told him that he had been convinced, if he had come to that conviction, and had abandoned his former views solely on account of the rotten potatoes of this season and of such rotten arguments as they had heard last night—it was an unsatisfactory and strange result! But, explain this as he might, the fact was undoubted that the protective interest was wrecked, and that this case must be added to the others as a further proof that every complex interest of which the right hon. Gentleman had ever been the champion, he had subsequently stranded. Fortunately, he must say that, when he heard the right hon. Baronet, in 1843, attempting to maintain the Corn Laws, without bringing forward those principles of political science on which they really rested, he felt that those laws were doomed; he felt that if the right hon. Baronet could bring forward no better arguments than those which he then adduced, or if the right hon. Baronet, aware of better arguments, was deterred from employing them, by the conviction that he could not adhere to them, and that he would be forced from them by "pressure from without," he felt that there was no longer any hope for the Corn Laws. I cannot, therefore, from experience, (concluded the hon. Gentleman,) place any confidence in the firmness or the skill of the right hon. Baronet, to maintain the institutions of the country. And I prefer—in that contest for those institutions which I see pending, and which, indeed, is opened now—I prefer to fight the battle, along with my hon. Friends, against an able and gallant Opponent, rather than continue to be led by one of the highest talent—the greatest experience—the utmost skill—and whom we should have gladly followed, had he been faithful to his principles, but by whom I cannot consent any longer to be led, as I plainly see that the course of his policy tends to the gradual but certain downfal of the valued and venerable institutions of the Empire.

MR. HUME said, he considered himself called upon to say a few words in consequence of what had fallen from the hon. Member who had just sat down. The speech of the hon. Gentleman was in no sense applicable to the present question before the House. He, for one, approved highly of the conduct of the right hon. Baronet, and he most essentially differed from the sentiments put forth last night by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, when he declared in the face of that House and of the country, that it was the duty of every public man to be led by party, and that the leader of a party was not entitled to alter his opinions. It was in effect saying, that though a public man discovered himself to be in error, it was nevertheless his duty to maintain it. He wholly disapproved of such a doctrine. He paid ten times more respect to, and would honour fifty times more, the declaration of the right hon. Baronet, who said that for years he had been mistaken—that he was convinced the principle on which protection was based was wrong—and that the arguments in its favour were altogether untenable. Such

language was highly honourable to the right hon. Baronet. He would ask hon. Gentlemen opposite what was the use of calling themselves a deliberative assembly, if their views were to remain unchanged upon any opinion they held during the whole time they were in Parliament? Were they to be regarded as a mere assembly of delegates? or did they come there to deliberate calmly and intelligently upon the affairs of the nation? He must tell the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down, that no man could be more anxious than himself to promote free trade, or to put the Church in a proper state; but he challenged the hon. Gentleman to point out a single Motion of his—and he would give him thirty years for the search—in reference to the English Church, which implied more than a reform of the abuses of the Church. He never made a Motion for the abolition of that Church, though he had ever been opposed to its pluralities and sinecures. He did, however, propose, upwards of twenty years ago, to abolish the Church of Ireland. England and Scotland had their established Churches, and if they were to have an establishment in Ireland, let it be the establishment of the majority. From the period when he made that Motion, they had tried various expedients with regard to Ireland; but they never would have peace in that country till the Church was put down. That was the remedy then, and it was the remedy now. Let no pet party have the preference in Ireland. The Catholics were entitled to equal rights and privileges with the rest of the people. The speech of the hon. Gentleman in reference to the past history of the right hon. Baronet was not applicable to the question before the House. The sole point was whether the right hon. Baronet had taken a course suited to the state of the country, and agreeable to the wishes of the people; and he would take it upon him to contradict the hon. Gentleman, by saying, that instead of the country generally being against the proposed change, nine-tenths of the country were in favour of it. As to the landlords, he believed they were going against their own interests; but he thought they did so in ignorance. He believed that the course proposed to be taken by the right hon. Baronet would be productive of the greatest possible advantage to the State, and that all classes—ay, even the Gentlemen themselves who were ready to give even factious opposition to these measures, would yet regret the part they had taken, because he believed there was not one of them who would willingly do an injury to their fellow men. So far, therefore, from hurling defiance and conducting themselves rather out of spite than in the way of argument, he did think that those hon. Gentlemen ought to address themselves to the question before them, and consider seriously whether or not the present was the time for that question being settled. Reference was made to what passed on the hustings four years ago; but were they to be told that a Member coming into that House was never to alter his opinions; or to propose measures that he thought best calculated to promote the good of the country, because he had not always entertained the same views? The hon. Gentleman had not considered this important fact, that if the right hon. Baronet entertained the opinions he expressed last night, and yet continued to support those measures which he formerly upheld, he would have acted contrary to the oath he had taken to his Sovereign to promote those measures only which he considered best for the country. He highly approved of the Queen's Speech, as a whole; but there was one thing to which he must object, and that was the passage in reference to the system for carrying on the abolition of the Slave Trade. That system he thought ruinous to the very object in view. If the right hon. Baronet would only consult the officers who had been employed on the coast of Africa, he would find that nineteen out of every twenty of them would tell him that, instead of lessening the evils of slavery, the system they had been acting upon had added to those evils, and had caused immense loss to England. He trusted the right hon. Baronet would take measures for informing himself on what principle those large squadrons were maintained on so unhealthy a coast, and that he would also make inquiry to ascertain in how far the evils of slavery had been increased. He highly approved of that part of Her Majesty's Speech which seemed to shadow out a great alteration in our commercial interests. He trusted they would from that day date a new era in the commerce of this country, and that the results of the next three years would be such as to induce foreign countries to follow our example. He hoped that every effort would be made by the right hon. Baronet to maintain a good understanding between France and England. He detested war, and he believed it was in the power

of England and France united to maintain the peace of the world. He considered the expressions made use of by Her Majesty very proper, when She recommended an increase of the Navy and Army. In such circumstances as the present, he considered it as one of the best parts of the Speech. And he said so on this ground: when he found a country from which he expected other things, displaying a hostile spirit, and venturing to set at defiance all those rules and regulations which civilized nations ought to follow, and seemingly bent on nothing but obtaining its ends by the employment of physical force—he should be acting contrary to all the views he had entertained through life, which were to condemn what was unnecessary and extravagant, but to support whatever was needful for the public service, did he not approve of this part of Her Majesty's Speech. He hoped that there would be a unanimous feeling in regard to this part of Her Speech, and that there would be exhibited a desire to place in the hands of Her Majesty's Government the means to maintain the national honour and character. He said this the more because, on many occasions, he had been accused of desiring to cripple the resources of the country. He had never attempted such a thing, though, at the same time, he must say he had been anxious to see the public service placed on a footing as economical as might be consistent with its due efficiency.

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, I never entertained any apprehensions that the contrast which might be drawn between the language used by Her Majesty with regard to the settlement of the unfortunate dispute that still prevails with the United States, and the language which has been held, I regret to say, by the Chief Magistrate of that country—I never thought that that contrast would be mistaken or misapprehended. We have no hesitation in avowing our sincere desire, for the interests of this country—for the interests of the United States—for the interests of the civilized world—to continue to make every effort which is consistent with national honour for the purpose of preserving peace. We have met that language, I think, in a temperate manner, and with, I hope, the most moderate, and temperate, and sincere professions of our earnest desire peaceably and amicably to terminate this dispute. I said on a former occasion, I never had any doubt that our intentions or our language would be misapprehended; and the speech which the hon. Gentleman, the uniform and consistent advocate for the strictest economy, has just delivered, convinces me that my anticipations will not be disappointed. I am sure that any proposals which Her Majesty's Government may think it their duty to make for the maintenance of essential purposes, or for the national honour, will be responded to and supported by this House. But let not me be mistaken. I think it would be the greatest misfortune if a contest about the Oregon Territory between two such Powers as England and the United States could not, by the exercise of moderation and good sense, be brought to a perfectly honourable and satisfactory conclusion. With regard to the speech of the hon. Gentleman upon my right (Mr. Colquhoun), I beg to tell him and to tell others, that I do not intend to be provoked to lose my temper; and let me tell him that the question referred to is become far too important to be disposed of by mere personal crimination. I thought, after the deliberation which he had given to the speech I made last night, there would have been some reply to the arguments which I had urged; and that, after the lapse of twenty-four hours, he would not have contented himself with passing by those arguments without a single reference, and bringing under discussion what had been my policy with regard to the Church of Scotland. The hon. Gentleman may depend upon it, that my policy with regard to the Church of Scotland will have no more bearing upon that great question, which must be considered and discussed in the House of Commons at a very early period, than any other circumstance utterly and entirely unconnected with it. The question must be decided by argument in this House upon its own merits. Sir, the hon. Gentleman charges me with having deserted my principles; and he says I have never, since the year 1842, made a speech on the Corn Laws founded upon the great principle of protection. If I failed in my duty, why did not the hon. Gentleman correct me? Why was it left exclusively to me to defend protection by arguments? When I was disappointing the hon. Gentleman in not arguing the question of the Corn Laws upon the great principle of protection, why did not the hon. Gentleman himself supply my deficiencies, and bring forward those arguments which I had omitted? Sir, I assure the hon. Gentleman I do not

undervalue party obligations. I have said already that it was my earnest wish to reconcile party obligations to the convictions of my own mind, founded upon experience and observation, as to what was necessary to be done for the public good. I said last night, and I now repeat it, that it was my wish, before the hon. Gentleman the Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) should again bring forward the question of the Corn Laws, to have been able to communicate to those who had honoured me with their confidence, and of whose confidence I have always been proud—it was my earnest desire to have been enabled to inform them that I could not continue my opposition to the Motion of that hon. Gentleman. That was the course I wished to pursue, and that was the course I should have pursued under ordinary circumstances. But I felt we were threatened with a great calamity. Delay was impossible; and it would have been dishonourable to evade the responsibility which attached to those who were in office when that contingency occurred; and that consideration alone prevented me from making the effort which I would have made of reconciling party obligation with my public duty. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I did see reason to doubt whether it were prudent for the agricultural interest to commit themselves to an interminable contest upon the subject of protection; and if I entertained honest and serious doubts as to the policy of their course, I think the hon. Gentleman will hardly contend to-night, that with that conviction I was bound to invite them to continue that contest. I think I should have acted a part which could not be questioned by any man, however disposed to attach weight to party obligation, if I had been able to take that course—to have summoned the party with which I had acted, and frankly to have avowed to them that I could not undertake the defence of protection; that I would not permit another Parliament to be elected with an implied guarantee that protection must for ever be defended; and that I must ask them to find, as I presume they would have found, some efficient substitute for so weak an advocate; for I should have been bound to tell them it was impossible for me, judging from the experience of the last four years, to continue to offer decided opposition to the reconsideration of the Corn Laws, and therefore I would have given them the opportunity, under ordinary circumstances, of finding another advocate. That was the course I was anxious to have pursued; but I certainly felt, to the full extent, the responsibility imposed on me by the particular calamity to which I have adverted; and I certainly did avail myself of the earliest opportunity that I could, consistently with my sense of public duty, to tender my resignation to the Sovereign, in order that others better qualified might have the opportunity of settling the question. What more could I do? I did not wish to retain office upon the ground of the necessity of the settlement of this question. I wished to meet the pressing emergency; but when I despaired of being enabled to do that with effect, then I tendered my voluntary resignation, and I enabled Her Majesty to call to her counsels one that was qualified in every respect to propose the adjustment of this question. For the circumstances which prevented the noble Lord (Lord John Russell) from undertaking that task, I am in no way responsible. The moment I tendered my resignation, and the moment I thought I was in a private capacity, knowing the embarrassment which I had occasioned by my resignation, which I felt, however, to be necessary for the public interest—from that day I signified to my Sovereign that, for the purpose of lessening the embarrassment, I would, in my private capacity, give all the aid I could to effect a just and fair settlement of this question. Sir, I have been accused of unfaithfulness to the Conservative interest. The hon. Gentleman said I have deserted the cause for which he has been contending, and I think he has said, by rather an unhappy metaphor, that his fingers were itching to make a reply. Well, now there are many who sit beside him, who have a perfect right to tell me that I have departed from the course which they think they had a right to have me take, and that, by having altered my principles upon the subject of the Corn Laws, I am now deserting them. I confess that, considering the individual from whom that accusation came, the charge does somewhat surprise me. As I said before, I expected to hear from the hon. Gentleman an answer to the arguments which I stated last night as the grounds for my coming to a conclusion different from that I had come to at former periods; but the hon. Gentleman said, not that he would answer them, but that my arguments were as rotten as the potatoes. Now I advise the hon. Gentleman, and I advise others, not to treat this question with too much levity. I say that unaffectedly,

knowing something of the hon. Gentleman's charitable and benevolent disposition; and let me assure him that two months will not elapse before he will sincerely repent the exhibition of any levity in the consideration of this question. You will find, before the lapse of those two months, that you cannot dispose of this question by jokes about mouldy potatoes. Since I spoke last night upon this subject, the Government have received only this morning a communication from the Commissioners who have been sitting in Dublin, which is a further confirmation of what I stated yesterday. As the hon. Gentleman's speech advanced further, I was not surprised at his unwillingness to combat the arguments which I adduced; because the hon. Gentleman consoled me for his condemnation upon the subject of the Church of Scotland—a question not immediately upon the Table, though that may have led to his present anxiety—he consoled me, I say, for this accusation, by a distinct declaration; first, that he cordially approved of the course taken by Her Majesty's Government with regard to their whole foreign policy; and, secondly, that he thought them entitled to entire confidence in reference to finances; and he said, he thought the course which I had taken individually in reference to finance was marked by great wisdom, by great prudence, and by great success. I should like to have heard from the hon. Gentleman, who thinks that my financial course has been marked by great wisdom, great prudence, and great success, considering that the whole merit of that financial policy lies in the reduction of excessive duties, in the abrogation of monopolies, and the free import of commodities; I should like to have heard the arguments, I say, by which the hon. Gentleman contends for exclusion and the strict maintenance of protection. It is not the imposition of the Income Tax, the mere raising of five or six millions by taking 3 per cent. from the income of the country, that the hon. Gentleman compliments as being marked by wisdom, prudence, and success. No; the hon. Gentleman, recollecting his former commercial liberality—still retaining, in spite of his attack upon me, the opinions of his earlier years, the hon. Gentleman's nature overcame him—the compliment made its escape from the suggestions of his own heart and conscience, and he praised my policy as wise, prudent, and successful, because I had obtained increased revenue by the diminution of protection. I am accused of deserting the principles of the hon. Gentleman, of deceiving him, and leaving him in the lurch! Why the hon. Gentleman, now the chosen advocate of protection, was in the year 1838 a decided advocate of the total repeal of the Corn Laws. [Mr. COLQUHOUN: No.] A Motion was then made by the hon. Gentleman the Member for Wolverhampton, that the House should resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, for the purpose of considering the Corn Laws. If I recollect rightly the noble Lord (Lord John Russell) was not able to vote with the hon. Gentleman. I have a very strong impression that in the year 1838 the noble Lord (Lord John Russell), alarmed at the prospect of an immediate repeal of the Corn Laws, notwithstanding the vagueness and inconvenience of the Motion, was not able to support it. Am I right? ["Yes, yes."] And I had the satisfaction of voting with the noble Lord in opposition to that Motion; but the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Colquhoun), more liberal than either myself or the noble Lord, was enabled to vote with a minority of about 90 against 300, under the banners, not of protection, but of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton. I dare say the hon. Gentleman meant to make some Motion, when the House got into Committee, for the final adjustment of the question; yet still we pretty well understand what was the meaning of voting for the Motion of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Wolverhampton; and if the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Colquhoun) did not vote for the repeal of the Corn Laws, he is the only one out of the whole ninety Members who thought his vote would bear any other construction. But do I upbraid the hon. Gentleman for having changed his opinions? Not in the slightest degree. The hon. Gentleman, from a repealer of the Corn Laws, has become the decided advocate of protection. I have offended the hon. Gentleman on account of the Church of Scotland, and I have offended him upon account of the Corn Laws, and the hon. Gentleman inflicts the punishment which is justly due upon my misdeeds. Connected with the Church of Scotland and with Maynooth, he takes the opportunity of my expressions on the subject of the Corn Laws to visit me with that punishment; but, as I said before, the hon. Gentleman's early opinions broke through all those restraints of party; notwithstanding, I hope he will not lose their confidence, of course. He is now the

chosen advocate of protection; but you must not forget, and I will not allow the hon. Gentleman to forget, that he was compelled to compliment me, in the first speech he has delivered on this question, for the great wisdom, the great prudence, and the great success of my financial operations. If they were wise, if they were prudent, and if they have been successful, in spite of the League, and in spite of the Church of Scotland, do let me have the hon. Gentleman's support, for I am going to act upon precisely the same principles on which I have hitherto acted; and to entitle myself still further to the hon. Gentleman's confidence, I hope for it upon account of my wisdom, and upon account of my prudence, and upon account of my success. The hon. Gentleman was very warm upon an expression that fell from my lips last night. I used the words, "an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed House of Commons." The expression "proud aristocracy" was an inadvertent expression; I wish I had the power of weighing every expression that I use. But I do assure the hon. Gentleman, upon my honour, that when I used the words "proud aristocracy," I meant merely to refer to those qualities which entitle a great body to be justly proud. It was not to pride of birth, or to arrogance of manner that I referred; but the *superbiam quæsitam meritis*, the just pride founded upon great services, not *hauteur;* the exhibition of great talents, and the performance of great functions. The last thing that entered into my mind was to use any expression by which the most sensitive could be offended. I regret that I did use the expression; but, as I said before, upon my honour I did not intend it. Nothing was meant further than the pride which the most exalted and most worthy could possess. Sir, I hope I am fully compensated for the bitterness of the hon. Gentleman by the sincerity of the compliments he paid me; but I have one further observation to make, and it is to repeat that which I stated at the outset, that I am determined that none of these accusations and impeachments shall disturb my temper. I believe I am influenced by considerations of a public nature—by the considerations of public duty alone; and I feel a strong persuasion that in advising a settlement of this question upon just and equitable grounds, I am giving advice the most useful to that interest with whose welfare my own is intimately connected. Feeling that conviction, I shall not swerve from my course through any merely personal considerations.

Lord JOHN RUSSELL: I do not intend to enter to-night upon the subject to which the right hon. Baronet has last alluded; but I do wish to ask him a few questions with regard to those parts of the Royal Speech which refer to our foreign relations. First, as to the Oregon question. I entirely participate in the feelings which the right hon. Baronet has expressed, that peace may be maintained with the United States of America, and may be preserved consistently with the honour of the country. But, Sir, there have been mentioned some circumstances in documents reported to be presented to the Congress of the United States of America, which I think makes it desirable to have some explanation from the right hon. Baronet. I thought last year the President of the United States assumed a tone upon this subject, and made declarations and propositions to Congress, which were not common in the usages of nations, nor becoming towards a friendly and independent country. But it would appear from the late Message of the President of the United States, and from documents he has presented to Congress, that a proposition for a compromise was made to the Representative of Her Majesty in the United States by direction of the President. I conceive that that proposition in itself alters the state of the question. I am not prepared to state whether that offer was a satisfactory or a wholly unsatisfactory one; but it did seem to me to be an opening which would require upon the part of this Government a statement of their opinion with regard to the terms upon which this country was willing to settle the question of the Oregon. I observe from the documents which I have mentioned that the proposition was not received by Her Majesty's Minister, but was declared inadmissible. I confess I think that was a hasty proceeding upon the part of the Representative of Her Majesty. I wish, therefore, to ask whether negotiations have since been resumed, and whether negotiations are now going on upon the subject? I will not ask for any of the Papers, although they have been made public by the United States Congress, to be presented to this House; but I am ready to leave the matter entirely in the hands of Her Majesty's Government until they declare that some issue, satisfactory I hope, has been made, before I ask for any infor-

mation as to the precise state of the negotiations. Let me say one word further with regard to the speech of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Montrose. Her Majesty requires the attention of this House to the increased estimates, to provide for the efficiency of our naval and military establishments: I can well understand, in the position of this country, the increasing demands which are made every year for naval and military purposes in different parts of the world. It may be requisite to ask for some increase in those establishments while we are in a state of profound peace, and there is nothing which can at all threaten our foreign relations. I trust it is upon this ground alone, and not upon the ground of any apprehensions arising from our discussions with the United States, that Her Majesty recommends the House to increase the estimates for our naval and military forces. For my part, I confess, I have thought for some time the demands especially upon our military forces are such, that, efficient as that force is, it is not too much to increase the numbers we have hitherto retained in our service. The other question I have to ask is with regard to the allusion in the Speech to the desolating and sanguinary warfare which is afflicting the States on the Rio de la Plata. It is stated to be the endeavour of Her Majesty's Ministers to effect the pacification of those States, and it is understood we have endeavoured to effect the pacification of those States by forcible and warlike measures. If that is the case, I somewhat doubt the grounds upon which that interference has taken place. It is stated in the first place that the commerce of all nations has been interrupted. That may be a ground in certain cases for endeavouring to compose these differences; but a further ground is given, namely, that acts of barbarity have been perpetrated. Acts of barbarity are very dreadful to contemplate; but I doubt whether it be wise for Parliament to regard them as grounds for forcible intervention. We have heard of dreadful acts of barbarity in other parts of the world, but they did not require, in the opinion of wise statesmen, the intervention of this country. The question I ask is, whether the right hon. Gentleman proposes to lay on the Table any Papers explanatory of the grounds on which Her Majesty's Government have thought it necessary to interfere in the warfare which is being carried on in the Rio de la Plata?

SIR R. PEEL: With respect to the first question put by the noble Lord, relative to the Oregon, I may state that a proposition was made by Mr. Buchanan some time since, with the authority of the President of the United States, to Mr. Pakenham, which suggested the division of the territory. It is unnecessary to say whether the proposal should have been accepted or not. Mr. Pakenham thought the terms then proposed so little likely to be accepted, that he did not feel himself warranted in transmitting that proposal to the Government here. Mr. Buchanan then immediately stated that the proposition was withdrawn. That is the state of the negotiation at present, so far as I am informed, with respect to the proposal of Mr. Buchanan. With the highest regard for Mr. Pakenham, with the greatest respect for his talents, and with the utmost confidence in his judgment, yet I think it would have been better, if he had, without reference to the nature of the proposition, transmitted it at once to the Home Government, for it might probably have been the foundation of some future and final settlement. Since that proposal has been withdrawn, this country has again repeated to the United States the offer of referring the matter to arbitration. The answer to that proposition, which was made by Mr. Pakenham, has not yet been received. With respect to the increase in the naval and military estimates, I think it is impossible for any one, considering the rapid progress of steam navigation, and the constantly increasing wants of our colonial possessions, not to see that the demands on the troops of this country are so urgent, that it is extremely difficult to fill up our regiments. New Zealand, for example, is making heavy demands upon us; and Hong Kong requires a considerable garrison. With every confidence in Foreign Powers, yet Her Majesty's Government do not think it wise altogether to neglect our national defences. We wish that there should be no uneasiness or anxiety as to the result of war, should it unhappily arise. During the last few years, there has been almost a total disregard of our national defences. Her Majesty's Government have deemed it their duty to make preparations, not such as to alarm Foreign Powers, but such as every country has a right to make for its own security against foreign aggression. There is no estimate which may not be justified on entirely defensive grounds; and we should have felt it our duty to have proposed an increase in the estimates, naval, military,

and ordnance, without reference to our disputes with the United States.

Sir R. INGLIS said, few people were more alive to the importance of maintaining peace with all the world than himself; nevertheless, he could not but consider it a happy circumstance, that the observations of the hon. Member for Montrose were received with an unanimous cheer from both sides of the House; for it showed that the people of this country were prepared to bear any burden rather than have the lives, the property, the honour of the country assailed for a single moment. He must congratulate his right hon. Friend, and the House generally, on the demonstration made upon the first proposal to increase the national defences.

The O'CONOR DON wished to say a few words with respect to Ireland, and the present fearful calamity which prevailed there. So far as he had been able to form any opinion, he concurred in the correctness of the accounts which had been furnished to Sir R. Peel respecting the failure of the potato crop in Ireland; and he feared that no precautions which the Government could take would avert the calamity which seemed impending over that unfortunate country. Her Majesty had been pleased to manifest Her sympathy with Ireland on the approaching distress; and he was sure that Her Majesty's feelings would be highly appreciated by the people of that country, who would give Her every credit for the feelings of benevolence with which She was animated. Her Majesty had also alluded in the Speech from the Throne to the recent frequency of assassinations in Ireland. He felt the deepest regret to be obliged to admit that there were parts of Ireland in which there was, unfortunately, too much crime, which all must deplore; and it was impossible for any words to express the abhorrence which he felt at the barbarities which were being committed in some parts of Ireland at this moment. At the same time, while he was glad to think that measures were to be proposed for the suppression of crime, he regretted to hear the right hon. Baronet state that he was not prepared to propose any measure for the adjustment of the differences between landlord and tenant. [Sir R. Peel: I did not say so.] He understood the right hon. Baronet to say, that he was not prepared to bring forward any such measure, in consequence of his having other measures to propose of more paramount importance. Now, the impression on his mind was, that no measure could be proposed of greater importance towards introducing tranquillity into Ireland, than that of the adjustment of the differences between landlord and tenant. He, therefore, implored the right hon. Baronet to turn his attention, and that of the Government, at as early a period as possible, to the consideration of this question.

Sir R. PEEL: I beg to state, in reference to the remarks of the hon. Member, that my attention and that of the Government has been occupied with this question: but all I can say to the hon. Member on the subject at present is, to ask him to put his question to me in a few days hence. I can assure him that I did not mean to imply that it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government not to bring forward a measure on the subject.

Mr. BANKES could assure the House that he had no disposition to mix up any acrimonious feeling with the important questions which now occupied their attention; and if he referred at all to circumstances which in part, and in part only, had been explained of the late strange transactions relating to the resignation and the re-appointment to office of the right hon. Baronet, it would be done, he would assure that right hon. Gentleman, in the same tone as he would use if he had the honour to meet him in his own parlour; but he merely wished to elicit some further explanations regarding transactions which were at present inexplicable. The right hon. Baronet, it appeared, had changed his opinion; but he did not understand from the right hon. Gentleman that the prospect and the apprehension of the famine to which he had referred was the cause of that change; and one point as to which they had a right to be satisfied, and on which he thought they were entitled to explanation, was the period when that change came over the mind of the right hon. Baronet; for if that was in the course of last Session, he thought the party who had hitherto considered themselves honoured in following his lead, might have cause to complain that they were not then instructed as to this change of opinion, and the alteration in his course which it might be necessary for them to anticipate. He did not understand that the right hon. Baronet's change had taken place in consequence or at the time of his apprehensions of famine. There was another point to which he would direct the attention of

the right hon. Baronet, as he thought it had been unexplained, and he would venture to say was inexplicable according to the information as yet afforded to the public. The point was this, if the right hon. Baronet did feel, as he was sure the right hon. Baronet did, because he said he felt, the great and imminent necessity of coming to an immediate course of action to prevent the mischiefs which he foresaw would arise—and early in November brought under the consideration of his Colleagues his change of opinion, and the necessity which he felt of acting upon it, and then when defending his opinion found was in a small minority in his own Cabinet, and therefore postponed his decision till some day afterwards in the same month. Before that day arrived an incident occurred—the noble Lord opposite wrote and published a letter, and the circumstance of the publication of that letter changed the course, as he understood the explanation of the right hon. Baronet, which he had resolved upon. He understood the right hon. Baronet to say that he had been placed in a different position by the publication of that letter, and that he could not pursue the course which otherwise he would have felt it his duty to adopt. Now, he was at a loss to conceive how the publication of a letter, even by a person so eminent in his station as the noble Lord, could have such an effect upon the leader of the councils of the Cabinet—supposing he had made up his mind to pursue a certain course—how that incident should cause a change in that course in any one particular. He would, then, observe, that the conduct of the noble Lord appeared to him to be inexplicable—that, agreeing with the right hon. Baronet in the necessity and emergency of the case, agreeing with the right hon. Baronet that it was essential, not only that there should be an alteration in the law, but that they should make that alteration immediately effective—the noble Lord having undertaken to form a Government—having accepted office under the auspices of Her Majesty—was yet deterred from his great undertaking by an accident so trivial as the fact of one of the proposed Ministers not choosing that another should have a particular office. It was not for them, undoubtedly, to cavil at the decision of the noble Earl; but it did seem strange of these two great persons in the State, the one holding the post of Prime Minister in the first instance, and the other holding the same post in the second instance—for Lord John Russell had accepted office—how these two statesmen should have been deterred from pursuing the course they had resolved upon by circumstances so trivial—the one by the publication of a letter, the other by a difference between two noble Lords—and should have abandoned the prosecution of that which they thought was called for by the emergencies of the nation, and leave the country in a predicament, which was a fearful one in their opinion. Happily, the danger did not exist; but in the mind of the right hon. Baronet the danger was real. Upon his mind a strong impression had been made; and how happened it that circumstances so trivial should have induced those two eminent persons to forego the opportunities which were thus put into their hands? The noble Lord did not wish to resort to the experiment of a dissolution of Parliament; but why not, if his measure was a good one? Why not dissolve the Parliament? It was reformed, and reformed under the auspices of the noble Lord; the constituencies were of his own appointment, planned in the scheme which he considered to be the most perfect that could be devised. Why not then appeal to the constituencies of the reformed Parliament, and take their opinion on the subject? Was it because he felt that that opinion would be adverse and contrary to his own? He had a right to assume that such was the case; because, if it had been otherwise, the noble Lord would have had no difficulty in proceeding to a dissolution. If he found that circumstances so trivial as these could divert persons so eminent from following up the opportunity of carrying their own measures, could he believe that they felt the great and imperious necessity which they would persuade the House they felt for making this great and important change? The right hon. Baronet, in his reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne, seemed to challenge an answer to the arguments contained in the speech which he delivered last night. Now he had understood that it was rather wished that the discussion of the merits of the project should be postponed to a later day; and, therefore, if he did not at the present moment attempt to answer the arguments of the right hon. Baronet, he trusted that it would not be imputed to any disrespect; and however incapable he knew himself to be of meeting the right hon. Baronet in the arena of argument, yet he would not at present absolutely

admit that he was unable to answer them. But with reference to the facts and statements of his right hon. Friend—he could not avoid using that term, and he was sure he should be sorry to lose his private friendship—with reference to those facts he felt that he was in a condition to give a denial to many of them. The right hon. Baronet had pointed to the season of prosperity which they were now enjoying; and upon that he grounded his wish for a change. He thought this was a surprising argument: his hon. Friend, however, wished to infer that this prosperity had been attained by a gradual and regular progress, and that the increase of prosperity had been in proportion to the progress of his measures. But he would remind the right hon. Baronet that at that period last year he was one of a deputation that attended him from twenty-two counties in the kingdom, complaining of serious distress. The right hon. Baronet could not have forgotten that fact; he could not but remember that he received that deputation with the courtesy which he was accustomed to show; and that he heard from the mouths of farmers themselves the statements of their distress. He did not know if the right hon. Baronet had it in his power to controvert these statements; but certainly he did not on that occasion controvert one of them though he recollected that the right hon. Baronet referred, as he had last night adroitly referred, to the subject of protection of wool. He remembered the right hon. Baronet, addressing one of the deputation, said, "Well, what do you say to the wool?" and he remembered that then, with the gallantry and openheartedness which belonged to that noble person, the Duke of Richmond stepped forward, and said, "Sir Robert, that observation applies to me, and to me only. There is not one of the Gentlemen present who was of my opinion with respect to the wool duty; there is not one of them who objected to the duty on wool being removed; on the contrary, they thought it would be productive of the results which it seems to have produced." Now, it was no argument against them, supposing it to be the fact, that they had never before adduced any doubt as to the propriety of his measures. The right hon. Baronet turned round to his hon. Friend who first spoke, and said, in a tone of great triumph, "I have you with me in my schemes of finance, which you admit have proved efficient for the prosperity of the country." Undoubtedly the right hon. Baronet had them with him; he had their votes, their support, their good wishes. But did it follow that they were never to stop in a course which they might think right, but which they knew was limited? Was it fair to them to adduce these arguments and say, "You have gone with me so far, and therefore you are bound to go the whole —— you are bound togo the whole length which I propose." The right hon. Baronet said, you approve of my financial measures. So he did—he admired his financial measures. He gave him full credit for the state and condition of the country; but did it follow therefore that he should wish to change that state and condition? The right hon. Baronet talked much—and he was aware of the pleasure it must give him, filling the high station he did—of the diminution of crime; but allow him to say that the progress of that diminution had not been gradual—in some cases crime had increased in an alarming degree. It was so in the spring of last year, when all the assizes presented the heaviest calendar that had ever been known; and at that time the price of wheat was the cheapest. That might not be the cause of this circumstance; nor did he mean to say that these two facts, which were coincident, had any necessary connexion with one another; but if the diminution of crime was to be adduced on the one side, he had a right to bring the circumstance he mentioned forward on the other. He was happy to say that the decrease in crime was now very decided through the whole of the western counties; but there was that exception at the particular period he mentioned, for which he did not pretend to account. Now there was a passage in the Queen's Speech—which he must say was a document drawn up with great care, with so much care that he believed any person who attempted it, would find it difficult to fix on a part to which to move an Amendment—but yet there was one expression to which he would take exception. The Speech said—and the Address, which was a mere echo to the Speech, also said—that they should endeavour to make the changes as little injurious as possible to the great interests of the country. But what was to become of the little interests—amongst other little interests take the small farmers' interests, and of whom it was said they had little or nothing to do with the question. Of this, however, he had a very different opinion; nor had any Member of those little interests, so far as he had heard, made any change or

turn of opinions for the occasion, as others had. With respect to the larger interests, the great interests of the manufacturers, he was happy to have it considered that he might be permitted to stand upon the same basis with them. He had no objection to do so; but then he must take up that position fairly, free from those restrictions which pressed on him. Give him, therefore, the benefits that interest possessed: these were terms they should not refuse him. But let him make this remark, that even in the great manufacturing interests were little interests, as there were both great and little in the agricultural interest. There were the hand-loom weavers, for instance. There were the weavers and framework knitters of Nottingham. With these interests the distress was of the worst kind. He had heard these interests had been and were struggling with the greatest privations, and struggling with such lowness of wages, that even the rate of remuneration in the agricultural counties, the low wages which he sincerely lamented, were high and large in comparison with the gains of these poor operatives. He wished, therefore, whether those little interests were or were not forgotten in the Speech from the Throne, that they should not be neglected here. No means had ever been suggested in all the declamation made on the subject of free trade for supplying that amount of employment which must be displaced by the change; and he thought the Government should be told that they should not stir one step in advance, until it had been provided, not only that the great interests should be secured, but also that the little interests of the State should not be left to starve. Starve, however, they would, if certain projects were carried any further. The noble Lord (Lord F. Egerton) who moved the Address with much eloquence, concluded with remarks he heard with much pain; because in those remarks appeared a ground of change, if not the chief ground of change of opinion held by the noble Lord and others, consisting in the danger which he thought he saw in the conflict of classes and of opinions, in a manner so fearful to the Constitution, that he trembled at the result—a conflict which he saw was carried on both with bribery and chicanery. He gave to the noble Lord the Member for London much joy upon the result of his Reform Bill, seeing that a noble and accomplished Lord changes his opinion upon a grave matter, because of the bribery and chicanery which have prevented any chance of free and unbiassed elections. And certainly no man could avoid feeling much apprehension, when it was seen that clubs and associations had been formed, in which language was held not far different to the expressions used in the old Jacobin Clubs of Paris. He did view, as all men must view, the existence of such clubs with the gravest apprehension; but he viewed with no less apprehension the circumstance that a Necker stood at the head of the Government. The right hon. Baronet, however, would know that when that comparison was made, it meant no disparagement. Necker was full of zeal for the public good, and, as respected his abilities, high in the general estimation and confidence, when he commenced that career which terminated so unhappily to his country—

"Dignus imperare si non imperasset."

Before he concluded, let him not forget to mention this—that the farmers had been losers by the system which had been followed, and losers for some years. That interest had been gradually recovering from depression. The goodness of the harvest, though not abundant, was at least an average crop; and that had assisted them greatly. They were, indeed, recovering; yet this was the moment chosen again to disturb them, and to shake their confidence — confidence shaken so much, that it was not to be restored by the present Government. He, therefore, under the circumstances, called upon the right hon. Baronet to appeal to the country; and he could assure him that he was ready to abide by the issue of the appeal. Whatever the issue of the appeal, he would abide most cheerfully by the decision made by the country, if that application were made by the right hon. Baronet in a legitimate manner.

MR. SHARMAN CRAWFORD said, as a Member from Ireland, knowing the state of the country, he could vouch for the truth of the statements made last night by the right hon. Baronet; and especially as to the condition of those parts of Ireland which were usually the least subject to distress. At least one half of the potato crop had failed in the part of the country from which he came; and, in the course of a few weeks, a scarcity of the most frightful nature would be the result. The poorest people had suffered most. Potatoes

were already more than double the price they used to be; and oatmeal was one-half higher than last year. In the Union where, last September, there were only 200 inmates, there were now 300 or 400; more than there had ever been before. The Poor Law guardians had called a meeting to concert measures to provide food for the people. He mentioned these facts, which had come to his knowledge, because they corroborated the statements of the right hon. Baronet.

Address agreed to, and ordered to be presented to Her Majesty by the whole House.

SIR R. PEEL said, he had reason to believe that Her Majesty would be prepared to receive the Address at half-past two o'clock to-morrow.

MR. BROTHERTON hoped hon. Members would attend and make a House to-morrow, and not keep Her Majesty waiting, as they did last year.

PUBLIC WORKS (IRELAND).

SIR T. FREMANTLE moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend an Act for the extension and promotion of Public Works in Ireland. The apprehension of a deficiency of food in that country in the ensuing spring and summer, rendered it important that every encouragement and facility should be given for the employment of the people in Public Works and otherwise, and this Bill was prepared with a view to facilitate that desirable purpose. He had also another Bill to propose on an early day, namely, a Bill to amend the Draining Act in Ireland, and afford greater facilities for carrying its provisions into operation. It was his intention to introduce, during the next week, a Bill for the construction of small Piers and Harbours in Ireland, with a view to the encouragement of the fisheries in that country. There was no subject which deserved more attention and consideration than the encouragement of the fisheries in Ireland; and this Bill was the more necessary as there were many remote parts of Ireland in which there were no great resident proprietors to encourage the fisheries, which might be made available for giving employment to the people and producing profit to the country. When they considered that one of the evils which was dreaded in Ireland was a deficiency of food, the benefit would be admitted of a measure, which, besides encouraging the employment of the people, would go directly to increase the supply of food to the country. The Bill which he was now about to bring in would give a power to advance certain sums for the purpose of encouraging public works, &c., half of the total sum required being subscribed by localities. There was another provision in the Bill which would be found of great advantage; its object being to extend the period of repayment from three to twenty years, while a discretionary power was to be given to the Treasury as to the rate of interest.

Bill brought in and read a first time.

House adjourned at half-past eight o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Saturday, January 24, 1846.

MINUTES.] PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Leicester, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.

PRIVATE BILLS. [See Tabular Synopsis at the end of the Session.]

House adjourned.

At two o'clock the House proceeded to Buckingham Palace to present the Address of Thursday to HER MAJESTY.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, January 26, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—1ª Real Property Deeds Registration.

PRIVATE BILLS. [See Tabular Synopsis at the end of the Session.]

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures at Manchester, and Inhabitants of Whitburn, for Repeal of the Corn Laws. — From Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Members of the Isle of Thanet Farmers' Club, and a great number of other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.—From Scorton, and several other places, for the adoption of a Measure to prevent the unconstitutional proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League in relation to the Corn Laws.

THE ADDRESS.

The LORD CHANCELLOR then read the following reply from Her Majesty, in answer to their Lordships' Address:—

MY LORDS,

I thank you for the renewed Assurance of your Loyalty and Attachment to My Crown and Person.

You may rely on My constant Desire to co-operate with you in promoting the Happiness and Contentment of My People.

THE CORN LAWS

The DUKE of RICHMOND, in presenting petitions from several places, praying for the continuance of protection to agriculture, said: In presenting these petitions

to your Lordships, and in stating my intention to support their prayer to the utmost of my power, I beg to say that these petitioners express their hope and trust that your Lordships will not consent to any alteration of the present Corn Law; and that, at all events, happen what may, your Lordships will not consent to any alteration without an appeal to the constituencies of the country, that it may be seen whether their opinions on this important question have undergone any change. I, as one of those who cannot conscientiously give my vote in violation of the compact made with the agricultural interest in the year 1842, and as one who cannot look without serious alarm upon the abandonment of the principle of protection, would call upon your Lordships to pause and hesitate before you teach those persons in every part of Her Majesty's extensive dominions who have been peaceable, quiet, and orderly, that to be unobtrusive is to be defenceless; and that systems which have been tested and approved by the experience of ages are to be abandoned in consequence of combination, intimidation, and the manifestation of party rancour. Till I find your Lordships giving your assent to any measure for altering the Corn Laws, I shall feel that it is impossible you can suffer yourselves to be intimidated by the Anti-Corn-Law League and their hired advocates and emissaries. I may add that, in presenting these petitions to your Lordships, I can answer for the respectability of a great many of the persons by whom they are signed.

MINISTERIAL EXPLANATION.

The DUKE of RICHMOND: I beg to ask the noble Duke whether he has received Her Majesty's permission to state to your Lordships' House those reasons which induced the Government to resign office, and afterwards to re-accept office?

The DUKE of WELLINGTON: My Lords, I have received Her Majesty's permission to state what may be necessary to this House upon the subject which has been referred to by my noble Friend. I wish to know whether my noble Friend intends to ask any further question?

The DUKE of RICHMOND: I consider that it would be most convenient to the House that I should not make a speech, but that I should merely ask a question of the noble Duke. I think we are all anxious to know the grounds which led to the resignation of Her Majesty's Government; and in my opinion we ought also to know how a Cabinet which could not form a Government on one day, was enabled to form one on another.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON: I rise, my Lords, to give an answer to the question which has been put to me by my noble Friend. But, my Lords, in doing so, although I can answer only for myself and my own motives, yet I must, in order to explain myself to the House, speak generally of what passed in Her Majesty's Councils; and I do feel myself under the necessity of detaining your Lordships for a few minutes on this subject; and you may rely upon it, I will detain you for as short a time as possible. My Lords, when the accounts were received from Ireland, and from different parts of Great Britain, in the course of the last autumn, of the state of the potato crop, and of the inconveniences which were likely to result from it, my right hon. Friend at the head of Her Majesty's Government felt it to be his duty to call his Colleagues together, in order to give them the opportunity of considering the Reports which were received. He accordingly did so; and he laid these Reports before his Colleagues. My right hon. Friend then stated to his Colleagues certain propositions for the adoption of measures which he felt it necessary for Her Majesty's Government to sanction, in order to avoid or to remedy the unlimited evils which, in his opinion, were likely to occur in consequence of this misfortune. One of the measures which was suggested by my right hon. Friend was, that Her Majesty's servants should recommend to Her Majesty, by an Order in Council, to suspend the operation of the existing Corn Law, so as to open the ports for the admission of foreign corn duty free. My Lords, it is not necessary that I should here discuss the motives stated, or the grounds on which this recommendation was founded. I, however, was one of those who considered that it was a measure which was not necessary to be adopted at that time. I considered that, although the misfortune to which I have referred, would undoubtedly have the effect of depriving millions, I may say, of our fellow creatures of a large part of the provision which they had made for their food for the year, yet, that misfortune did not exactly amount to a deficiency of food. There was no insufficiency of corn, according to all the accounts, in the country; and the opinion of others, as well as my own, was, that such arrangements should

be made as had been made heretofore to meet the evil, by finding the means of employment, and the means of procuring food as the reward of that labour. It appeared to me, besides, that under the provisions of the existing Corn Law, if it was desirable that the ports should be opened, Parliament had provided for such an emergency; and that if ever the price of the particular article of grain should reach such an amount as would manifest a deficiency or want, that the law had provided that foreign grain should be admitted at a nominal duty. Under these circumstances, my Lords, it appeared to me to be unnecessary to suspend that law; and on these grounds, I certainly was one of those who objected to the proposition of my right hon. Friend. At the same time, I was most anxious, and the Government unanimously concurred in the desire, to meet the difficulty, and accordingly, they proceeded to adopt all such measures as seemed to them calculated to meet the apprehended misfortune. They framed a Commission in Ireland, and took care to instruct it in respect to those measures which were to be adopted for giving employment to the people, and thereby procuring food for them as a reward and in payment of their labour, and for carrying out those measures which on former occasions have been found to be so beneficial, and to work so effectually. I believe that all those plans have been resorted to. They are not new to the public servants of this country. I believe, I say, that they have been effectually adopted; and that it may be hoped, therefore, that the great inconveniences and great misery which appeared likely to arise from this misfortune will be avoided. My Lords, in the course of the discussion upon these measures, it certainly was intimated that the suspension of the Corn Law might render the renewal of it at a future period very difficult; and it undoubtedly was intimated that it might be necessary to make an essential alteration in the law. Subsequently, my Lords, when the instructions were agreed upon, to be given to the Commissioners appointed to visit in Ireland (as I before stated), my right hon. Friend intimated his opinion of the absolute necessity of making an essential alteration in the Corn Laws. I believe that everybody admitted that some alteration was necessary —that an alteration, that is to say in some points, was called for. There is no doubt that that was admitted by all. But, my Lords, in the opinion of my right hon. Friend, it was necessary to make an essential alteration in the existing Corn Law. Many members of Her Majesty's Cabinet objected to this suggested alteration, and there was a strong difference of opinion upon the subject. As for my part, I certainly was of opinion that it was desirable to avoid making any alteration which was essential in the present Corn Law. But, my Lords, I confess that in my individual position, I considered the consequences of a division of opinion in the Cabinet, as affecting the stability and safety of the Government itself; and I thought it essential that the differences of opinion should, if possible, be reconciled. Having served the Crown of England for above fifty years in high public situations, I consider it my duty on all occasions to endeavour to promote its service; and I did everything in my power to reconcile the differences of opinions among my Colleagues, and to preserve in union a Government which enjoyed the confidence of the Sovereign, of the public, of both Houses of Parliament. I considered it my duty to make every effort to maintain union in the Cabinet, and to reconcile differences of opinion, as the best services I could render to my Sovereign in the circumstances in which the Cabinet was placed upon the subject. I, nevertheless, my Lords, was unfortunate in those efforts—I did not succeed: and the result was, a declaration on the part of my right hon. Friend, that he would submit to Her Majesty his resignation of office, and that he would recommend to Her Majesty to endeavour to form another Government. My Lords, this course was adopted, after a discussion whether it was most advisable that my right hon. Friend should come down to Parliament and make a proposition for an alteration of the Corn Laws, having at the time, a divided Cabinet, of which the majority were against the proposition; or whether it was not best, and more to the interest and convenience of Her Majesty, that my right hon. Friend should proceed at once to Her Majesty and intimate to Her Majesty the position in which he stood, and express his desire that Her Majesty should permit him to resign his office, and that Her Majesty should form another Government. That course was discussed, and I certainly was one who thought that it was desirable my right hon. Friend should resign his office rather than go into Parliament with a divided Cabinet; and I certainly believe that all the Members of the Cabinet were of the same opinion.

Accordingly that was the course which my right hon. Friend took. He waited upon Her Majesty, and informed Her of the situation in which he found himself, and he recommended to Her Majesty to form another Administration. Her Majesty sent for another noble Lord, and that noble Lord, I understand—indeed I know—did make an endeavour to form an Administration. In that endeavour the noble Lord did not succeed; and Her Majesty, thereupon, thought proper to write to my right hon. Friend, and to desire him to resume his situation which he still held until another Administration should be formed. My right hon. Friend wrote to me, (I was in the country at the time,) and informed me that he had been sent for, and that Her Majesty had desired him to resume his situation, and that he had determined, happen what might, that he would, even if he stood alone, as Minister of the Crown, enable Her Majesty to meet Her Parliament. This being the resolution of my right hon. Friend, I highly applauded his decision, and I determined that I for one would stand by him. I felt it my duty. I was of opinion that the formation of a Government in which Her Majesty would have confidence, was of much greater importance than the opinions of any individual on the Corn Laws, or on any other law. My Lords, I received a letter from my right hon. Friend desiring me to attend a Cabinet Council that evening, which I did. I applauded the conduct of my right hon. Friend. I was delighted with it; it was exactly the course which I should have followed myself under similar circumstances; and I, therefore, determined, my Lords, to stand by him. My Lords, at the same time that I did this, I well knew the position in which my right hon. Friend stood in relation to the Corn Laws. I knew well that in consequence of my right hon. Friend having resigned office into Her Majesty's hands, because he could not prevail on his Cabinet to support him in a material alteration of the Corn Laws, those whom Her Majesty employed to form a new Government must have had a full knowledge of the particular circumstances under which my right hon. Friend resigned office. The noble Lord the Member for London knew that my right hon. Friend, under the particular circumstances of the case, could not go into the House of Commons and again defend the Corn Laws in the same way which he had done in the preceding July. My right hon. Friend could not go into the House of Commons and defend the Corn Laws against those Gentlemen who were informed of the alteration in my right hon. Friend's opinion, and who, of course, in such an event, would have reproached him with the alteration in his opinion. I knew well, therefore, when I told my right hon. Friend that I would stand by him on his resumption of government, I knew well that in so doing I must be a party to a proposition for a material alteration in the Corn Laws. I knew it, and I admit I knew it. So far my Lords, I have accounted for my own conduct. I agreed to stand by my right hon. Friend, and to support his proposition; and I acted on that night, my Lords, in the full confidence with which I here state this evening, that although the proposition of my right hon. Friend may be found to involve a material alteration in the Corn Laws, yet that it will also be found satisfactory to the country, and satisfactory to the Friends of the right hon. Gentleman. The proposition, my Lords, with the alteration it contemplates, will, at the same time, give such advantages to the landed interest as the landed interest have a right to expect in the general arrangements of the country. Now, my Lords, I beg you to recollect my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council is a great landed proprietor: his interests are those of agriculture; he is connected in friendship and association with most of your Lordships; and, therefore, it cannot be supposed for a moment that he would betray the interests of a body of such importance as the agricultural interest. No, my Lords, I repeat, that when your Lordships see my right hon. Friend's proposition, which will be laid before you in the course of the next few days, you will then find that my right hon. Friend has not betrayed his duty in the measure which he recommends to your adoption. At all events, whatever that measure may be, I must say this, that, situated as I am in this country—highly rewarded as I have been by the Sovereign and the people of England—I could not refuse that Sovereign to aid Her, when called upon, to form a Government, in order to enable Her Majesty to meet Her Parliament and to carry on the business of the country. Upon that ground, my Lords, I present myself to your Lordships; and I claim from you an acquiescence in the principle I have laid down, that I positively could not refuse to serve my Sovereign when thus called upon. I have no doubt, when the measure is laid

before your Lordships, it will meet satisfaction here, and general approbation throughout the country.

The DUKE of BUCKINGHAM said, as the noble and gallant Duke had given their Lordships an account of the late movement in the Cabinet as far as he had been personally concerned, it was desirable that their Lordships should know from some noble Lord on the other side of the House, why those who had been called upon by Her Majesty to form a Government, on the occasion of the resignation of the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury, had not succeeded in doing so. After having listened to his noble Friend, the noble Duke who had just sat down, he must confess that the explanation given by his noble Friend did not appear satisfactory to him. It appeared that the Government, as now constituted, had become almost entirely a free-trade Government; and he would wish, therefore, to know why, when the Government had found noble Lords in that House ready to come forward and form a Government on those principles, they, professing an altered opinion on the subject of free trade, were not ready to support and assist those noble Lords in carrying out the principle which, for so many years, they had advocated with consistency and principle? That was a question which he thought the country had a right to have answered. How, again, was it that the noble Lord and those who were ready to join him, were unable to perfect the object of which they had so long been the champions? He could not but lament deeply to hear of the change of opinion which had taken place in the present Government, recollecting, as he did, the principles which they had formerly professed. He only wished that the proposition which the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government was to bring forward next evening would, as the noble Duke had promised, prove satisfactory; but, for his own part, he could not bring himself to believe that it would be found so in that House, or by the agricultural interests of the country generally. Should his apprehensions be well founded, he, for one, would be ready to assist his noble Friend at his right hand (the Duke of Richmond) in resisting any measure injurious to the agricultural interests, no matter by what Government it should be brought forward.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON: I don't know what the meaning of a free-trade Government is. Will the noble Duke state what he means by a free-trade Government?

The DUKE of BUCKINGHAM begged to claim the attention of the House for a moment longer. No doubt his noble and gallant Friend was as much staggered at the accusation made against him of being a Member of a free-trade Government, as he (the Duke of Buckingham) was to find his noble and gallant Friend in a Cabinet approving of such principles. He could understand noble Lords opposite belonging to such a Government, because they had always professed such principles. Those noble Lords had been prepared to form a Government on free-trade principles; but the noble Duke, and those with whom he acted, had turned out the Government of those noble Lords on account of the principles which they professed with regard to the Corn Laws. He could not help, therefore, feeling, when the Government of his noble Friend, with whom he had acted in 1831, had since then so completely changed their opinions on this subject, that they were now, if not a free-trade Government, at least as nearly approaching that title as possible.

The MARQUESS of LANSDOWNE said, he had on a former day declared himself perfectly prepared to state, perhaps at some length, the circumstances under which he, in common with his noble Friend the noble Lord the Member for the city of London, and others, had been called upon to form a Government, which would unquestionably have been such a one as the noble Duke who had just sat down had described, namely, a Government formed on the principles of free trade. But all the circumstances connected with these occurrences had now been so fully stated, and were so generally before the public, that it must have reached their Lordships in common with every other person in the country, and he really did not, therefore, feel himself called upon to detain the House by entering into all the occurrences that had then taken place. If he did not find himself so circumstanced, he certainly should, of his own part, have availed himself of any opportunity that might have offered to state the particular grounds on which he had given his adhesion to the principles of the total abolition of the present Corn Law, in connexion with what he should deem an indispensable accompaniment of such a course, namely, the bringing forward of other measures of justice for the alleviation of the

burdens that peculiarly affected the agricultural interests, and the continuance of which he would regard as unfair towards those interests, the protection duty on corn being taken off. Having been formerly an advocate for a fixed duty on corn, he felt that he ought to have some good reason for abandoning that principle at the present moment, after his former public declarations in favour of it. But when he had the high authority of his right hon. Friend at the head of the present and of the former Government, that the substitution of a fixed duty for the existing Corn Law was one to which he never would consent, and when he found that to this high authority was added that of his noble Friend the Member for the city of London, who now declared himself in favour of the abolition of all protective duties, retaining his opinion that a fixed duty would have been the most satisfactory arrangement that could be made of this question, and one which, if it had been adopted earlier, would have prevented the agitation that had taken place on this subject—he, nevertheless — having never maintained that a fixed duty ought to be adopted on the principle that a Corn Law should be an exception to the ordinary laws of commerce, but, on the contrary, having advocated it on the ground that he thought it ought not to be an exception to these laws, but that, while other protective duties were continued, a duty on the importation of foreign corn ought to be continued also—he did think, if it were not practicable to bring a fixed duty before the consideration of Parliament with a chance of its being adopted, that the entire abolition of the Corn Law was to be preferred, either to the sliding scale, which had been for some time the law of this country, but which, as he thought, had been mischievously the law of this country, or in comparison with any alteration of that sliding scale, or in comparison with what was called an evanescent duty, the tendency of which must be to perpetuate the feeling of insecurity which had for some time operated so mischievously among both the agricultural and the commercial interests. With these feelings, the result of his deliberations with those who had been waited upon by his noble Friend to form a Government was, that the entire abolition of all interference with the corn trade, accompanied with the removal or alteration, as far as was consistent with the public duty, of every burden bearing on the landed interest, was the only practicable course open their adoption. Having been called upon by the noble Duke, he thought himself bound to state thus fully the particular grounds which had led him to concur in the general opinion entertained by those with whom he had consulted on the occasion, and the grounds which had induced him to state that opinion to Her Majesty when he had been honoured with Her Majesty's commands to attend Her more than once on this subject. Not closing his eyes to the difficulty which the new Government would have to encounter in meeting Parliament as at present constituted, he felt that no circumstances, even the most favourable in other respects, ought to have induced his noble Friend the Member for the city of London, and others who had not the confidence of Parliament, not possessing a majority in either House, to undertake or contemplate the undertaking of any such duty, unless they had been assured that the right hon. Baronet then at the head of Her Majesty's Government should find himself incapable of carrying on the public business ; and secondly, unless it could also be ascertained whether those who differed from the right hon. Baronet in the Cabinet, on the question of an alteration of the Corn Law, did or did not think themselves capable of carrying on that law. It was only on the information so obtained that the project of forming a Government was entertained. Their Lordships were aware that it had been stated elsewhere to what extent the question had been entertained, and how it had ultimately been abandoned. All he could add was, that it was his fervent hope and wish that this great question might be dealt with in Parliament in such a way as to ensure an improved commerce in corn, in a manner consistent with justice to the occupiers of land ; and above all, in a manner calculated to procure and ensure that which had not hitherto existed, namely, something like a certainty in the pursuit of these transactions. He was anxious that the merchant-importer, the consumer, and the farmer, should have something like a certainty of the prices which the article was to bring. The question as to the manner in which the Act to be brought before their Lordships should be passed was, he thought, one of much greater magnitude at the present moment than the question in whose hands the government of the country should for the moment be placed. He should not, therefore, enter into any details on this latter subject, more especially as he thought it had been sufficiently explained elsewhere. The facts had already appeared before the public, and their Lordships must

therefore be perfectly cognizant of them. He trusted the consideration would press itself on their Lordships, what was the most just and the most satisfactory mode of dealing with this question, in whatever hands the Government should be placed. He for one had been throughout of opinion that the facility which the present Government possessed of inducing noble Lords to carry this question was greater than any that others could have, and that, as the matter could only be passed through the House by effecting conversions in some quarter or another —not on his (the Opposition) side of the House, but among noble Lords opposite— a much greater facility was possessed by Her Majesty's present Government for effecting that result than would be at the disposal of another Government. He was therefore sanguine enough to hope that, under the influence of noble Lords opposite, this great question may be brought to a final and satisfactory settlement.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON: I wish to add a few words to my explanation to your Lordships, relating to the question proposed to me whether I would undertake to form another Government on the principle of maintaining the present Corn Law. It is perfectly true, as stated by the noble Marquess, that in the course of the discussions which took place (after the resignation of my right hon. Friend, and before his resumption of office) between Her Majesty and the noble Lord in another place, and the noble Marquess—it is perfectly true that I, and I believe others, were called upon to state whether any one of us was disposed to form a Government on the principle of maintaining the existing Corn Law. My Lords, what others answered, I cannot pretend to say. I answered immediately that I was not—that I could not undertake to form such a Government. I do not recollect that during the discussions previous to the resignation of my right hon. Friend, any one had talked of the formation of a Government on such principles; but as soon as I was appealed to, I made that answer. But, my Lords, when I made that answer, I did it not only out of diffidence in my own ability to undertake such a charge, but likewise, my Lords, because I felt that it would be absolutely impossible, according to my knowledge of the opinions of the House of Commons, to form a Government in which the public could have confidence, which should be formed on the principle of supporting that measure. Under those circumstances, my Lords, I certainly, when called upon to say whether I would or no form a Government on that principle, declared that I could not and would not.

The EARL of RADNOR said, amongst the variety of questions there was one which had not been put—a most important one, because it related to the people and to the general state of this country. The question he should like to ask would be, what precautions had been taken to counteract the misfortune and calamity which had fallen on the country? The noble Duke had told them in his first speech that many millions of the people of this country were deprived of their food. They knew that the alarm on this subject was so great that the First Lord of the Treasury, on the 31st of October, was prepared to propose to the Cabinet to proceed at once to issue an Order in Council to open the ports for the admission of foreign corn duty free. Divers Cabinet Councils were held, as the public knew, upon that subject; and, after meeting several times, Her Majesty's Government parted on the 6th of November without having come to any other resolution but that of appointing a Commission to inquire into the state of the potato crop in Ireland. Everything that was done on that 31st of October was calculated to excite alarm and apprehension in the country; but they separated on the 6th of November, and never came together again until the 25th. It appeared to him to be rather an extraordinary proceeding, that when the country was in a state of apprehension, and well-founded apprehension too, of famine, the Government, after meeting and consulting upon a variety of occasions upon that subject, should part without doing anything to relieve the anxiety of the country, or to obviate the evils that were apprehended. Then, on the 25th of November, they met again; and the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, still entertaining the same opinion, and wishing to introduce the same measure, found himself precluded from doing so, because his noble Friend the noble Lord the Member for London had published a letter in which he said, that the very thing ought to be done which the Premier proposed to do. That appeared to him to be an inconceivable thing, that because a man thought that a certain thing ought to be done, yet it was not to be done because another was of the same opinion. It seemed to him not to be the conduct of rational men, but rather very much like that of a spoiled child, who said, "I want to do this; but you tell me

I ought to do it, and therefore I won't do it." Yet that was precisely the conduct of the Government. Now, he wanted to know what had been done on behalf of the people. On the 31st of October those apprehensions were felt by the Cabinet, and they were felt up to the present moment; for no longer ago than Friday last, if he were rightly informed, they were talking in another place of mouldy potatoes; but the Prime Minister told them it was no subject for a joke, for in two months they would find it was a serious calamity. Had anything been done, then, to provide against that state of things? Could anything be more calculated to excite apprehension than the proceedings of the Government? They met, consulted, quarrelled, and separated without doing anything, and that too at a time when, as the noble Duke said, many millions of people were deprived of their accustomed food—for they knew how many people in Ireland lived on potatoes. He wanted, then, to know whether anything had been done? and, if not, whether anything was to be done? And when? for if they were to wait for the settlement of the Corn Law question, he feared that the distress would be much aggravated before that time. As for the proposed alteration in the Corn Laws, he feared very much, after what had fallen from the noble Duke, that it was not likely to be what he should very much approve of. Whilst he was on his legs he would say one word only with respect to what had fallen from the noble Marquess below him. Now he, for one, could not understand what were the exclusive burdens that were felt by the landed interest, and for which compensation was to be given to them. He hoped that that would not be given without inquiry into the subject, and, when that inquiry was taken, he very much doubted whether any such compensation would be given.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON said, the noble Earl who had just spoken could not have attended to what he (the Duke of Wellington) had stated to their Lordships; for, if he recollected right, he stated to their Lordships, that a Commission had been issued, and Commissioners were sent over, and the Commission formed, and instructions given in every respect as to the mode of providing work for the people, and of finding them food as the reward of their labour. He thought the noble Earl was mistaken, if his recollection did not fail him; for he thought that the Cabinet met often between the 6th and the 25th of November, and that Parliament was prorogued in that interval, and that must have been done under the advice of the Cabinet.

The DUKE of RICHMOND then presented a petition from the landowners, tenant-farmers, labourers, and other persons interested in the prosperity of agriculture, at Wareham, against any alteration in the Corn Laws. With reference to what had fallen from the noble Earl (the Earl of Radnor) as to the peculiar burdens upon land, he joined him in the hope that before any change was made in the present law, there would be an inquiry into that subject; and, if there were, he (the Duke of Richmond) pledged himself to prove that a farmer paying 300*l.* a year rent paid treble the taxes that Mr. Cobden paid, although he made 30,000*l.* a year. The members of the League, both in that House and out of it, were always making assertions, but were never proving them.

The MARQUESS of CLANRICARDE said, that if the noble Duke was so desirous of having an inquiry into the peculiar burdens on land, the fault of his not yet having procured it rested not with the public, but with the Friends of the noble Duke himself: because, year after year, his hon. Friend Mr. Cobden—as their Lordships might know by the Votes of the other House—had moved for a Committee to inquire into the peculiar burdens upon land; and however unable the Friends of the noble Duke had been to meet the arguments of his hon. Friend on this subject, either in the House or out of it, he having converted almost all persons out of the House, and he (the Marquess of Clanricarde) trusted a very large majority, as well as their leader, within; yet they had always defeated that inquiry. The reason for suggesting that inquiry now, might possibly be delay; but, if that reason could possibly be set aside, he should be most happy to go into it; because he was in precisely the same position as the noble Earl (the Earl of Radnor) near him; because, although he had always heard, on both sides of the House, that there were peculiar burdens upon land, yet he had been unable to understand what they were. He certainly had heard tithes mentioned; but they were not peculiar burdens upon land, any more than were the quit-rents or head-rents of an English copyhold estate. Anything else he had never heard of; but, he did say, that if that inquiry could be gone into without delay, he, for one, should be most happy to consent to it, really and

truly, for the purpose of acquiring information upon the subject.

The DUKE of RICHMOND said, that an attack had been made upon his Friends the agriculturists in the House of Commons; he, therefore, got up in their defence. Why was it that they had not agreed to the Motion for a Committee to inquire into burdens upon lands? Because Mr. Cobden prefaced his Motion for that inquiry by avowing that it was with the intention of getting rid of the Corn Laws altogether; and every one who was used to the proceedings of Parliament knew that it was usual to resist a Motion brought forward with any other than the avowed object. His Friends were always ready for a fair inquiry. He supposed that the highway rates and the poor rates were not burdens upon land. He should like to know whether one of his tenants did not pay more poor rates than the whole League put together? He was quite ready to go into the inquiry. His noble Friend said, he should oppose it, if it were for the purpose of delay; but he was sorry to hear his noble Friend say, that this measure was to be pushed through Parliament without inquiry. His noble Friend said, that Mr. Cobden had made converts of the whole of the Cabinet of Sir R. Peel, and the rest of the Ministers; and then he said that he had made converts of almost every body out of doors. If that were the case, then let the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government go to the people of England upon this question. He (the Duke of Richmond) would say to the farmers throughout the country, "Protection, not to corn alone, but to British industry." Let them go to the country, and ask the manufacturers of England—ay, the manufacturers of this town—the English tailors and shoemakers, whether they would consent to foreign articles coming in free of duty? He defied them to go to the country; but let them go and appeal to those constituencies that placed the present Government in power; and he said that those constituencies would say, "We were against free trade then, and we are against free trade now."

LORD BEAUMONT wished to say but one word upon this subject, and that was in answer to his noble Friend, the noble Marquess behind them. His noble Friend said, that the friends of the agriculturists had refused inquiry into the burdens upon land hitherto, but now, at this moment, they loudly called for such inquiry. Such would have been his conduct if a Motion had been made to that effect in that House —viz., formerly to have refused such inquiry, and now to call for it. He would explain that apparent inconsistency. It was not till that moment that there was any prospect of a total repeal of the Corn Laws; and as long as those laws were in existence he thought it was the bounden duty of the agriculturists to submit to the peculiar burdens that bore upon them: any inquiry would have been useless, unless it had been with the intention of removing those burdens, and as he thought that they ought not to be removed, he considered that such an inquiry would have been useless; it would have wasted time, and would have raised hopes and expectations in many persons engaged in the cultivation of land that would not have been realized. That was his reason for formerly opposing an inquiry into the peculiar burdens upon land. But now a change had taken place in the country, which had so disorganized parties, which was going far to threaten all the institutions of the country, and which menaced such frightful revolutions in our commercial relations and agricultural interests that he thought the House could no longer delay to revise the whole of the local and general taxation of the country, with a view to a more equal distribution of the burdens; and he was therefore one of those who called for an inquiry into the burdens upon land — the Poor Laws — the commutation of tithes, not that he considered tithes one of the peculiar burdens upon land; they were real property, in the possession of the tithe-owners, and were no burden upon land; and if an inquiry were asked for into the law of the commutation of tithes, it would be for the purpose of doing justice to those persons who held them; and he would take this opportunity to say that many of those persons had in this contest behaved in a manner highly to their credit—he meant the clergy of the Church of England, who had not meddled on the one side or the other, though at that moment their property was likely to be affected, as well as that of other classes of the community. But he said, he wished for an inquiry into that subject, not as a burden upon land; but if his noble Friend wished to know what were the peculiar burdens upon land he recommended him to consult the two volumes now lying on the Table— the admirable production of the Poor Law Commissioners, and the Report on Local Taxation. He would ask his noble Friend to read through the passage

which said, that nearly 12,000,000*l.* of local taxation were paid by real property alone, and that stock in trade, profit in trade, and funded property, were totally exempt from that taxation. If, then, those 12,000,000*l.* were annually paid by real property, they were a burden upon land; and he thought that if they did go into the inquiry they would see that, independent of the enormous amount raised, there were in the distribution of these burdens, and in the manner of their assessment, grievances of which the land had a right to complain. There were certain restrictions in the employment of capital in the cultivation of land, as well as excise laws against the free use of the produce of the land, of which the landowners had a right to complain. Whilst he was on his legs, he might be excused if he mentioned an observation that struck him during the explanations that had recently taken place. He must say candidly that the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington) had explained the part that he had taken in the great scene of conversion with his usual distinctness; but he thought that curiosity might well be excited to know what were the grounds, what were the motives, what were the reasons that made converts of the rest of the majority of the Cabinet who opposed the opinions and plans proposed by the Prime Minister. He thought they had a right to know—he would not say a right, but curiosity might well be excited to know what made a convert of the late First Lord of the Admiralty; and again, what made a convert of the noble Lord the President of the Board of Control. He could not imagine that it was any light reasons that had influenced his conduct; for he (Lord Beaumont) remembered listening in that House to a Speech the most convincing that could be addressed to their Lordships in favour of protection. Again, he trusted that the motives that might have converted the noble Earl the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, were not that he might have an additional argument in arranging affairs on the other side of the Atlantic; for, if the noble Earl imagined that merely the prospect of profit would prevail, or if he considered that such measures would enter into the scale, he (Lord Beaumont) held that the noble Earl offered an insult directly to the North Americans, to imagine, that they would arrange a great national question on the ground and for the reason of profit, instead of relying upon those great principles of justice and right, and interpretation of treaties, which ought alone to govern a nation; and which were now so clearly pointed out by those who had taken the trouble to read the numerous documents upon that subject. With regard to the question which had been raised by the noble Earl, he owned he perfectly agreed with him in thinking that it was something extraordinary that the publication of a letter from Edinburgh should have cured the potato disease. The moment that letter came out, it appeared that a total change took place—the immediate measures were immediately abandoned, and that for no reason, motive, or ground which was distinctly put forth, except the extraordinary one of a letter having been published in the public journals. He had but one word more, and that was with regard to the question of Ireland. If they now removed the sole advantage, perhaps, that Ireland enjoyed, viz., that of obtaining a greater profit on the sale of Irish produce in the English markets, in consequence of the duties on the introduction of foreign produce, he said that they removed and weakened one of those ties of love and gratitude which she might otherwise feel for this country. And he thought it would be strange if that argument were not afterwards put forward by those who might hope to obtain another kind of repeal. Seeing the rapidity with which an agitating club had effected the conversion, conscientiously, no doubt, of the Cabinet upon this question, he thought that another club of repeal might hope to attain the same success, especially when furnished, as they then would be, with the strong argument that the great advantage Ireland hitherto derived from her connection with England was about to be taken from her. He might go further and say, what was the use of the Canada Corn Bill? In giving that Bill to Canada, they placed that Colony in a situation in which she was indebted to the mother country for certain advantages. They now would remove these; and, from what was going on in America, how could they expect that Canada would long remain dependent upon this country, when they gave her no advantage in her trade? They had heard of the annexation of Texas, and another annexation might follow. He would not have mentioned this; but, at a time like the present, when we were on the point of a great commercial revolution, it was the bounden duty of every man to cast his eyes as far as he could, and endeavour to see what might be the result of the measures that were proposed.

The EARL of ABERDEEN said: Believing that my situation in some respects differs from that of my Colleagues, I think it necessary to explain to the noble Lord the circumstances of the question he has put to me. It is unnecessary for me to trouble your Lordships with the reasons which brought me to the opinions which I hold; but I wish to state to the noble Lord that when my right hon. Friend, at the commencement of November, made the proposal to the Government which has been alluded to, I gave to that proposal my cordial and unhesitating assent. It would not be proper at this time to enter into the reasons that induced me to come to that opinion; but such was the opinion I then entertained, and such is the opinion I entertain now.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, January 26, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW WRITS.—For Ripon, *v.* The Right Hon. Thomas Berry Cusac Smith, Master of the Rolls in Ireland; For Lichfield, *v.* Viscount Leveson, now Earl Granville.

PUBLIC BILLS.—1°. Drainage, etc., (Ireland).

PRIVATE BILLS. [See Tabular Synopsis at the end of the Session.]

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Leicester, and a great number of other Places, against, and from Milnathorp, and several other Places, in favour, of the Repeal of the Corn Laws.—From London, for placing Wheat and Wheat Flour, imported from British India and the Australian Settlements, on the same Footing in respect to Duties, as the like Articles, the produce of Canada.

NAVAL RETIREMENT.

ADMIRAL DUNDAS wished to know from the hon. Member (Mr. Corry) whether the arrangement contemplated some time ago with respect to the allowances to officers retiring from the navy had been carried out?

MR. CORRY said, that the number of officers signifying their willingness to retire on those allowances was not sufficiently great to enable the Admiralty to carry the plan into operation, but the Admiralty had the subject still under consideration.

PUBLIC WORKS (IRELAND).

House in Committee on Public Works in Ireland.

SIR THOMAS FREMANTLE moved—

"That the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland be authorized to direct advances to be made out of the Consolidated Fund of the said United Kingdom to an amount not exceeding 50,000*l.*, to be applied for Public Works in Ireland."

SIR H. W. BARRON hoped that the House was not about to stop at such a grant as that. It would be but a drop of water in the ocean as compared with the wants of the country.

SIR T. FREMANTLE had looked at the whole state of the country, and the sum would be found not to be so insignificant as the hon. Baronet imagined. He (Sir T. Fremantle) had stated on Friday night last the sum of 50,000*l.* would not be expended unless a similar sum were raised either by levy from the counties or by subscriptions of private individuals. But he had also stated that he would bring in a Bill to facilitate the building of harbours to protect the fishermen along the coasts of Ireland, and other works of a public character, which would afford employment.

MR. WILLIAMS begged to be informed whether it were proposed to take the usual securities for the return of the moneys so advanced, or was the sum to be a grant?

SIR T. FREMANTLE replied that the sum of 50,000*l.* was to be an absolute grant. There were to be sums also at the disposal of the Treasury, which would be lent on security as loans; but the 50,000*l.* now moved for, was in the nature of a grant.

COLONEL SIBTHORP asserted that no man in the House was more anxious than he was to provide employment for, and alleviate the distress of the people of Ireland, consistently with his duty as a Member of that House. But he was anxious to ask the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for Ireland—and he hoped that he would speak distinctly, for there were hon. Members near him (Colonel Sibthorp) who heard him as indistinctly as himself—he should like to know what was actually going to be proposed in the nature of Public Works in Ireland? He liked nothing to be done in the dark in these days of darkness. He held in his hand the Thirteenth Report of the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland, and he found no less than eleven statements of different works there. He wanted to ask the right hon. Baronet whether that grant of 50,000*l.* was to be given in addition to what had been before granted. Although he did not mean to say that the money would be actually wasted in jobs, yet he wished to know how it was to be laid out, for he could not but remark that the Report before him gave an account of many jobs, and amongst others that job of jobs, the Shannon Harbour job. That was what he called an important consideration. There

had been quite enough exhibited already to entitle him to ask the question whether the sum of 50,000*l.* was proposed to be in addition to what had been already granted annually?

SIR T. FREMANTLE was ready to give the hon. Gentleman every possible information; and he would endeavour to make himself audible. That vote was to be in addition to the sum before granted for Public Works in Ireland, and he had stated, when he was previously on his legs, that those other grants were nearly exhausted. And if the hon. Member had given him notice of his intention to ask the question, he should have been prepared to reply more fully.

MR. HUME wished to ask the right hon. Baronet whether he intended by that vote to admit the principle that the public money was to be applied for the employment of the people? He recollected that, on former occasions, the admission of such a principle had been most sedulously avoided. The question he had to ask the right hon. Baronet was, to what purpose the money was proposed to be applied? Was it to be to the employment of the people? What good, he would ask, had arisen heretofore from such grants? He thought it desirable that it should be shown by specific accounts what relief those votes had before given to the people, or whether they had not rather been made available to the purposes of the landed gentry, for the building of a bridge, or something of the like sort. In England and Scotland every man was employed, and there was no necessity for votes of public money. Why was it not so in Ireland? The state of that country was attributable to misgovernment and bad legislation; and he protested against that mode of finding employment for the people, whilst other causes, which prevented their employment, were suffered to exist. By so doing they would only lend their assistance to perpetuate the state of things which now exists. If such a principle were to be established, he did not see why they should not act similarly towards Stockport or Paisley, or other places where distress might reign. He thought they should be informed how former grants had been applied before they agreed to the one at present sought for. He should be the last man to stop a vote which should give employment to the people of Ireland; but he thought that before the Imperial Parliament gave its assent to such a principle, other steps should be taken to remedy the causes of distress. He wanted to see the people of Ireland on a perfect equality with the people of England and Scotland. He wanted to see every part of the kingdom alike. If asked to give his vote on that question, he should object to give money to any portion of the community in preference to others. He thought the right hon. Baronet ought to pause before he pressed such a Motion.

SIR ROBERT PEEL begged to assure the hon. Gentleman that every information he should require upon the subject should be most freely given. Nothing could be further from the intention of Her Majesty's Government than to permit the interests of individuals to be attended to or promoted by the outlay of such votes as the one under consideration. If the hon. Gentleman would look into the case, he would find that Parliament had placed a discretionary power in the hands of the Government with regard to the expenditure of those grants. They were not called upon to make particular disclosures with respect to the manner in which they were expended. For several years past it had been customary to vote sums of money to be so placed at the disposal of Government; and he could say that the present would be the last year they would be called on. But there were reasons which he could not at present explain for not entering into detail on the present occasion.

MR. HUME could only say, that it was because he had in his possession reports that took away from him all dependence on the mode in which public money was expended, that he offered the remarks he had just made. When the Parliament and the British public had come forward with large subscriptions to aid the poor in Ireland, he was able to show that a large portion of that money had gone to pay rents to the landlords. He was aware that terrible as were the sufferings of the people at the period he was speaking of, the approaching time, there was reason to fear, would be more severe than was anticipated. He merely wished that they should not adopt a dangerous principle. However, after the assurances of the right hon. Baronet, he would not oppose the Motion.

SIR H. W. BARRON only regretted that the vote was so very trifling. [*Laughter.*] Gentlemen might laugh, but the condition of the people was much too serious to be made a subject for laughter. When famine was staring people in the face, was it a time to be haggling about a paltry

50,000*l.*? and when he commented on it, Gentlemen, who professed to be political economists, must meet him with a laugh. He called it a paltry sum under the present awful circumstances of Ireland; and he spoke of his own knowledge, when he said that thousands and hundreds of thousands of people would shortly be without any other resources on earth than the charity of the country. Before many weeks passed over their heads, that would be the state of those people. He spoke from his own personal knowledge and examination of four counties in the south of Ireland, when he said that hundreds of thousands would shortly have nothing to depend upon but the charity of that House; and was it proper to meet him with a laugh by false political economists, because the vote did not meet their views? He repeated, it was a false policy to haggle about so small a sum, and he hoped that ere long he would see Her Majesty's Ministers come down to that House to demand that the people of Ireland should not be allowed to starve.

Mr. WILLIAMS: As the hon. Baronet who had just sat down, by looking in his face when speaking of the laughter with which he had been met, and the false political economists, appeared to direct his allusion to him, he would beg leave to offer a few observations. He should be sorry to think that he had appeared unwilling to give any assistance to the people of Ireland, or not to sympathize with their sufferings; but if the principle were admitted that the people of this country were to be taxed for the relief of the occasional distress that occurred in Ireland, the present was certainly not the time for withholding it. But he did say that there were means of avoiding that public expenditure by doing justice to Ireland, by giving protection to life and property such as existed in the other parts of the United Kingdom, and by such means enabling capital to flow into the country, to bring with it its necessary consequences. He hoped when a measure of the nature under discussion was proposed, a proposition to introduce confidence into the country would be brought forward; and he felt sure that there was not a Member of the House who would hesitate to come forward in support of it.

Viscount CLEMENTS begged leave to differ from one expression of the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down, and who appeared to forget or to have paid very little attention to facts when he spoke of taxing the people of England for the relief of the people of Ireland. He seemed to have quite forgotten the vast number of Irish landed proprietors who were living in England, paying taxes, and spending their incomes which were drawn from Ireland; and it appeared to him (Lord Clements) very unreasonable for the hon. Gentleman to complain of some small portion of those taxes being returned to the people of Ireland as a loan for relieving their distress. The hon. Gentleman seemed to have forgotten the enormous sums of public money expended in ornamental works in this country which would not and could not be reproductive; whilst he (Lord Clements) apprehended that most of the works about to be commenced in Ireland would be reproductive. He should support the vote.

Dr. BOWRING did not think that the objection of his hon. Friends had been properly understood. They did not object to the security to be given for the loans; they only wanted to know, would the mode proposed remove the amount of misery expected to arise in Ireland; and they offered their cordial assistance to any measure which would be productive of that effect.

Motion agreed to.

House resumed.

RAILWAY BILLS.

Sir R. PEEL: Mr. Speaker, Her Majesty's Government have felt it to be their duty to avail themselves of the earliest opportunity of calling the attention of the House to the large number of railway plans which will probably be brought under its consideration; in order to take its opinion as to the best mode of dealing during the present Session with the great question of railway legislation. The attention of the Government has been directed to this subject for some time past, and they have collected together all the information which they think at all likely to be advantageous in its investigation; but they have at the same time felt it their duty, in a matter affecting so many private interests, rather to appeal to the authority of a Committee of the House of Commons than to submit any plan of our own for solving the railway difficulty which must ensue during the Session. As the organ of the Government, therefore, it is my duty to propose that a Select Committee be appointed to consider the mode in which the House shall deal with the Railway Bills proposed to be submitted to the House during the present Session. The Government have been

making all the necessary inquiries, and are prepared to lay before that Committee all the information that shall enable it to come to a satisfactory judgment as to the course to be pursued. I wish in the first place to call the attention of the House to the number of Bills which have been passed during the last two or three years, and the amount of capital authorized to be raised by them. In the year 1844, there were forty-eight Railway Bills authorizing the raising of capital to the amount of 14,780,000*l.* In 1845, that is, last year, 118 Railway Bills received the sanction of Parliament, giving powers to raise a capital of not less than 56,000,000*l.* It is generally computed that it requires three years for the completion of a railway. At least it is now a matter of experience, I believe, that the average time required for the formation of a railway in this part of the United Kingdom is three years. If that calculation be correct, we shall find that, for the completion of the railways which have already received the sanction of the Legislature, it will be necessary to levy a sum of nearly 70,000,000*l.*, sterling on the capital of the country during the next three years; that is to say, in the year 1846 an amount of 23,500,000*l.* will be required to be drawn from that capital, which is now employed in the usual channels of commerce and trade for the completion of railways within that year. In the year 1847, there will be required a further sum of 23,500,000*l.* sterling; and in the year 1848 the sum of 18,000,000*l.* must be drawn from the money circulation of the country for the same purpose. In making this calculation, I of course deduct, in the last year, the Railway Bills which passed in the year 1844, as, with respect to those schemes, a portion of the capital proposed to be raised has been already expended—but, including the complement of capital required for the completion of the railways authorized during the last Session, and the years 1843 and 1844, the sum to be levied for the execution of railway projects already passed, during the next three years, is not a less sum than 70,000,000*l.* Now the sum of 23,500,000*l.*, I think it will be allowed, is a very large sum to be diverted in one year from the ordinary circulation of the country; and that amount devoted to railway enterprise will occasion a large drain upon the available capital of the kingdom. Yet these are the sums which we may presume will have to be raised under enactments which have already received the sanction of the Legislature. We now approach the consideration of the number of railway schemes which we may expect will be brought under consideration during the present year. In whatever proportion, as compared with the total number deposited, those schemes may receive the sanction of Parliament, when they are in course of execution, there will be a still larger demand upon the capital of the country than I have stated. The number of railway plans for England, which were deposited at the Board of Trade by the time required by the Act of Parliament was 606. The number of railway plans for Scotland deposited at this time at the Board of Trade is 121, and the number of railway plans for Ireland deposited is 83. There have been therefore deposited at the Board of Trade not less than 815 different railway plans—the Bills for which will require the consideration and sanction of Parliament. I am aware that many of them are rival schemes for providing railway accommodation to the same district of country, more than one of which, for the same purpose, it is probable Parliament will not sanction; and in respect to several others, there is every reason to apprehend that from other causes they will not be proceeded with. It cannot, however, be disputed that there will be a great number of railway schemes brought under the consideration of Parliament in the ensuing Session—a number far exceeding that which has been brought forward at any former period. The railway schemes, the plans for which are at this moment deposited with the Board of Trade, involve the construction of not less than 20,687 miles of new railway; and so far as a judgment can be formed from the public advertisements of the various companies—and judging from the analogy of the expense of other new lines—the total amount of expense which is contemplated to be raised for the completion of these new railways is not less than 350,000,000*l.* sterling. Making all deductions for the failure of rival lines, it is impossible, I think, to contemplate the application of such an enormous amount of capital to these undertakings, without a material disarrangement of the general currency and trade of the country. I think it is most important, therefore, at the earliest period of the Session that the House of Commons should consider what principles ought to guide them in railway legislation. Now, no one can feel more strongly than I do the objections which there are to the interference

either of the Government or the House, to stop legitimate speculation in railway or other private undertakings; call them speculations if you will: the feeling ought to be that private speculation and private enterprise should, as a general rule, be left undisturbed. And with regard to railways also, I for one feel most favourably disposed towards the application of British capital to legitimate enterprise rather than to foreign undertakings, calculated, as such enterprizes are, to promote the convenience of the public and the general welfare of the people. The question then is, whether there are good and sufficient reasons for interfering at all with the progress of railway speculation; and, if so, what should be the principles which guide and govern that interference? In the first place, then, I must say that I think there is great probability, after making every deduction from the total amount of railway plans deposited at the Board of Trade, namely, 815, and from the 20,000 miles of new railway which they comprise; after making every deduction for the number of mere rival schemes, and for the number which will not stand examination of the Board, or will not pass the ordeal of the House of Commons, or that will fail from other causes, I think there will certainly be such a number of plans left, as to make it almost totally impossible for the usual Committees of this House, bearing in mind the other important business that will have to be considered, to devote that proper attention to them which their extent and importance demand. We all know how great was the pressure upon hon. Members last year from this cause; and there can be no question that this year it will be still more severe. That alone, however, may not be a conclusive objection; and it may be said, if the House of Commons cannot dispose of this part of its business, it must consider whether it should appoint some other tribunal to which it should be referred; but I think it is a great and important question whether or no you will permit, or rather whether you will encourage the application of so large a capital to railway undertakings. Will it be consistent with the public advantage—will it conduce to the best interests of society, and the satisfactory carrying on of the railway system? I repeat I should be more willing to encourage the application of capital to British railway enterprises rather than to foreign undertakings: but the question is, is it for the advantage of sound railway enterprises, that such an enormous amount of capital should at once be absorbed by railways? I doubt it. I doubt whether it would not be discouraging, rather than holding out encouragement to legitimate railway schemes, for I think it is probable that in consequence of the severe competition which would be created by the great and extraordinary demand for labour, and the great rise of prices which the application of such an amount of capital would occasion, the progress of the railway system would be considerably retarded. I think too, that many of the estimates would be found from these causes, greatly inadequate for the completion of the undertakings, and some of them altogether delusive. If the railway schemes proposed, were about to be carried on under existing legislation, I admit there might be objections raised of the gravest kind against any interference; but the intervention of Parliament is called for: it has to decide whether it will suffer—not the absence of interference, because a law must pass giving the direct sanction and encouragement of the Legislature to each scheme, but—the whole number of schemes to be carried into effect. If there be 600 or 500, or treble the number of railway bills we had under consideration last year, I doubt whether it would be possible for the House satisfactorily to inquire into the merits of each; and I still more doubt whether it would be for the public benefit that so extraordinary a demand for railways should be encouraged, or that such an enormous application of capital to one branch of enterprise, diverting it from all others, should be sanctioned by Parliament. I say I doubt whether it would be for the public advantage to encourage it; but, as I said before, Her Majesty's Government have thought in such a matter they should not proceed without the sanction of Parliament; and for that purpose it is my intention to move that a Parliamentary Committee, composed of men whose opinions, from their authority, will be entitled to the highest respect, should be appointed—that they should have referred to them the information the Government have already collected on the subject, and consider of some plan by which our future proceedings, in regard to railway legislation, should be governed. Her Majesty's Government has caused a plan to be prepared, which will be given to the Committee, showing the extent and direction of all the railways existing and proposed. All the

different schemes, the plans of which have been deposited, and which will come under consideration, have been classified under different heads, and the plans referring to existing lines have also been arranged in like manner; for instance, under one head is described those lines between the metropolis and a distant part of the country which are now incomplete, either from their being a void or from some part of them not yet being finished. Under another head are classed those railways which appear to give the greatest facilities of communication to those parts of the country which stand most in need of it—and another head embraces those railways connected with the internal defence of the country, that is, the coast lines. These different classifications have been already made, and the Committee will, on its appointment, thus be spared much labour which might have been necessary were there no previous preparation. I trust, therefore, that the House will approve of the proposal with which I shall conclude, namely, that a Select Committee be appointed, for the purpose of considering what course shall be taken with railways proposed to be submitted to the House during the present Session. I have abstained from mentioning many matters connected with this subject, as Standing Orders, &c.; but I trust that the Committee will make reports to this House from time to time of the result of their labours, and the conclusions which they shall have arrived at, by which the decisions of the House may be regulated. The right hon. Gentleman concluded by moving—

"That a Select Committee be appointed to consider the mode in which the House shall deal with the Railway Bills proposed to be submitted to the House during the present Session."

The Question having been put,

MR. GISBORNE had listened with much attention to the speech of the right hon. Baronet, but he was sorry to say that he had not derived much information from it. It appeared to him that the intention of the right hon. Baronet was to throw on a Committee what last year was the duty of the Board of Trade, and that a certain number of these schemes should, on the authority of the Committee, be stopped *in limine*. The right hon. Gentleman had not informed them what grounds the Committee would have upon which to come to a decision whether they would hear the parties, or simply be guided by the information laid before them. Without intending any disrespect to the Members who might compose the Committee, he must say that he did not think their decisions would deserve more respect than those of the Board of Trade last year, simply because they would not have the information necessary for coming to a satisfactory decision. On one point he differed from the right hon. Baronet: he doubted whether the amount of money for the purposes of making railways next year would depend on the decision of the Committee. Even if the Legislature should pass all the schemes, he doubted whether it would make much difference in the amount of the capital applied. He believed the labour market and the money market would control the amount of capital, whatever the decision of the House might be. Fourteen or fifteen years ago a railway from Manchester to Sheffield was applied for. It was vehemently contested, and was opposed by the Bridgwater Canal Company. Parliament, after having heard evidence, came to the decision that the railway ought to be made; but the public thought differently, and though the Bill was passed the railway was never made. That showed that railways could only be made in proportion to the amount of capital which the country could spare. He regretted that the right hon. Gentleman should have thought it necessary to interfere. He did not think the House could sanction the appointment of the Committee without having a more clear explanation of what were to be its functions, and of the questions to be submitted to its consideration. He had never heard so meagre an explanation for so large a demand as that made by the right hon. Gentleman. He could not conceive how the proposed Committee was to determine upon the merits of any branch lines that might be most advisable to have first examined into. It appeared to him also that while this Committee was sitting, the progress of every Railway Bill before Parliament would be retarded, and indeed all the operations of railway legislation suspended, until the Committee concluded its labours.

SIR R. PEEL trusted that the information which this Committee would be enabled to collect and convey to the House from time to time, in its reports, would be found most advantageous. He considered it better to avoid going into any more particular details on the present occasion, as it might be more expedient not to express any more decided opinion, which might be

supposed to convey the judgment of the Committee.

Sir G. GREY hoped the Government would have some of its Members on the proposed Committee, as it was only proper that it should be represented on the proposed body, and the views of the Government known. The adoption of any principle upon which a selection was to be made, was, in his opinion, a most important function, and particularly with reference to such Bills, for which the time for going before the Standing Orders' Committee was now so limited. In respect of these Bills, he did not think the proposed Committee could act fairly, unless a greater amount of time were afforded them. There was one thing, however, which he hoped had not escaped the Government, and that was the consideration or adoption of the suggestion thrown out by the hon. Member for Sheffield—namely, that it would be desirable, as far as possible, without touching the jurisdiction of Parliament, to carry on all inquiries as to matters of fact, traffic, local affairs, &c., before some tribunal out of that House. He would only remind the House of the length of time occupied during the past Session by the inquiry of the London and York Committee as a proof that some such course as that referred to would be most advisable and convenient. Beside, there were a great number of Irish and Scotch Railway Bills, the expenses of which would be considerably lightened by having some such tribunal, before which their witnesses might be examined, and thereby prevent the necessity which now existed of summoning them here before a Parliamentary Committee. All the work connected with such business would be, by the adoption of some such plan, not only done with greater convenience to the House, but greater advantage to the public.

Sir R. H. INGLIS said, it was morally and physically impossible for the House of Commons to attend to railway legislation alone, even if they had nothing else to occupy their attention, if the same system were to be pursued which was followed up last year. Under any circumstances they would, at least, have three times as much railway legislation during the present Session as they had during the last; and they might have six times as much if all the projects before Parliament were proceeded with. He agreed with the right hon. Member who spoke last, that it was quite possible to establish a tribunal to which matters of fact might be referred, and that such tribunal should be independent of both Houses of Parliament, and ambulatory. The appointment of such a tribunal would save the promoters of all railway bills nearly 3*l.* out of every 4*l.* which they now spend in procuring the testimony of witnesses. For his own part he had but to say, in conclusion, that he would be very glad if such a tribunal as that referred to were established, independent, not only of Parliament, but of the Government also.

Mr. CHARLES BULLER said, he looked upon this matter as one of so great importance, that he would make no apology, even at this period of the evening, for addressing a few observations to the House upon the subject. He trusted that the question of the railway management would be brought under the consideration of the House at a period when a comprehensive plan for a more perfect system could be taken into consideration. It must be borne in mind that the appointment of railway tribunals out of the House was, in fact, transferring their powers to another body; and he held that it was a proceeding of great importance, and that the House ought to look with the greatest deliberation at all the bearings of such an appointment, before they consented to part with any portion of their jurisdiction. He could not, at the same time, with every desire to preserve the jurisdiction of Parliament, come to any other conclusion than that the proposal of the two hon. Members who had preceded him might be adopted, though it would materially affect the authority of Parliament. The mode of forming election committees was a very different matter, and bore no analogy to this; but with regard to railway committees, he would say, that if the House were to give up its authority to the Government on the question, it would be depriving the people of England of their legitimate rights, and he, as a Member of that House, of his local authority. He recollected last Session that some of his constituents waited upon him, and as he did not trouble himself much in these matters—for, in fact, he took no trouble in any thing he could avoid — well, these gentlemen requested that he would interest himself in behalf of the Cornish Railway, which was about being made in the neighbourhood of Liskeard; but he told them, that he could not interest himself, as there was no chance of his having any thing to do with

the matter, in consequence of his being Member for the town; as every question in which local interests were concerned, instead of being examined by the local representative were taken away by the present system, and transferred to a body of gentlemen who were quite strangers to the county, and who had little or nothing to do with its interests. When the House delegated a matter to a committee of its own body, they said, "We cannot make an inquiry into the circumstances of this cause; but you must do it and report to us." The House, however, was not bound by this report; but they took the suggestions it contained and weighed them well, and, if thought advisable, adopted them. The House would always pay great attention to the proceedings of any committee to whom they delegated their powers; and such a body would, no doubt, be very useful, in the way of giving information, and enlightening the minds of the Members of either House. Such a body were particularly able to take into consideration all questions of the expediency of the measures which must be considered before they were passed. There were many instances in which two inquiries had been instituted before Committees of the House of Lords, and of the Commons also. These were not different kinds of tribunals, but the same evidence twice repeated. This he considered preposterous. What was the effect last Session? The Commons' Committee upon the London and York Railway sat no less than eighty-four days, and when the matter went to the Lords, there was a prospect of its occupying eighty-four days more there; but the Bill was dropped from an absolute impossibility of the promoters being able to get it through before the conclusion of the Session. The present system of going over the same case before two committees was, he considered, a waste of time. A number of Gentlemen were put upon a committee, they went into the whole nature of railway matters, and in fact, learnt the A, B, C of them; they heard the speeches of counsel, the evidence of engineers and other information, as in the case of the London and York; and then, with their accumulated knowledge, the instant they had decided upon the matter they were turned loose upon society. Another and another committee had to be instructed in railway affairs; and much time was lost between the wrangling of counsel and their lengthened addresses, lasting for thirty or forty days, at fifteen guineas a day, which was a strong stimulant for the learned gentlemen to go on and instruct committee after committee, by stating the same facts and arguments for their respective guidance. Now, a tribunal sitting exclusively to examine railway schemes, would say to the counsel, when they were commencing their oft-told tale — "We don't want to hear that again; we have heard it before; and we have made up our minds upon the subject." Still this was necessary to be gone through by each different committee; and his opinion was, that so long as these committees went on, they would never be able to get through with the business; but if they had a permanent body, there would be no such trifling with time as there was at present. There was another topic which it would be just as well for the House to recollect; viz., that in all their inquiries it was above all things most desirable that the Members of that House ran no risk of being charged with partiality, or of having their motives misunderstood. Before the commencement of last Session, the House had a very considerable idea with regard to the railway business that was likely to come before them. That was, however, now taken away from them; and no inquiries had, it appeared, been made by the Board of Trade. It had been objected, that the inquiries by the Board of Trade had only reported upon one-third of the schemes which were brought before them; they had no power to hear objections, but could only form their judgment upon the engineers' report, and the quality of the lines proposed. It was quite clear, therefore, that the reports of that body could not be taken as authority by the House; he did not know whether or not this arose from any feeling that too much power ought not to be given to the Board of Trade in these cases; and herein he thought the great objection to the Board of Trade lay—in not having sufficient power delegated to them to discharge their duty. With regard to the question of a commission out of the House, it should be composed of gentlemen who possessed a practical knowledge of matters, who had got the habit of deciding quickly on them, who would possess such a mass of information which could never be got in the Houses of Parliament. He would give the handsomest salaries that could be given to any commissioner or public functionary whatever. If Parliament were to do so at the expense of the

promoters of the various schemes that were to come before them, those promoters would take care to economise the public time, as they would thereby save themselves expense. It was the first business of a magistrate to administer justice cheaply but efficiently; this, in reference to railway matters, according to the present system, could not be done. He hoped that a commission would be appointed.

COLONEL SIBTHORP had a great distaste for what were called commissions; and he still retained that distaste for such enormous sums of the public money to be paid away for these commissions. His humble opinion was, that they were nothing more or less than Government jobs. It was evident, from the speech of the hon. Member who had just sat down, that he purposed paying by the job, and not by the day; so that after this commission had concluded its sittings, it would be necessary for another committee to be appointed to inquire how far the commission had usefully employed their time before they received one sixpence of the public money. Far be it from him to entertain any unfavourable feeling against any of the Gentlemen who had been proposed by the right hon. Baronet to form this Committee; but what he had done on a former occasion, he felt it to be his duty to do again. Individually, he cared nothing about it; but he stood there to represent a great body of the people, and on their behalf he claimed the right of demanding that neither of the members of the proposed Committee for the investigation of the important schemes to be brought before them, should be directly or indirectly interested in them. Parliament should not sanction measures which would tend to destroy industry. Some hon. Members talked of the public good; but they only meant one word for the public, and two for themselves; and he hoped they should not again see such measures discussed in a House of twelve or fifteen Members. He was a protectionist; and he believed the right hon. Baronet was not. He wished to protect our native industry; and he repeated that he hoped no hon. Gentleman who might be interested would be placed on the Committee, but that each Member of it should be called to the bar of the House, and made to declare that he had no interest in any railway whatever.

MR. HUDSON said: I am afraid I am not one of those very disinterested individuals whom the hon. and gallant Colonel has described as the only proper persons to sit on the proposed Committee; but I feel it due to myself and the interest I represent to make a few observations on what has fallen from the right hon. Baronet. He proposes that a Committee shall be appointed to consider, and that immediately, what schemes ought to be submitted to Parliament and receive the sanction of the Legislature. I would suggest to the right hon. Baronet, that there are two ordeals through which those schemes ought to pass before that Committee enters upon the performance of its duties. We ought to know of the different schemes lodged at the Board of Trade, whether they are in a proper position to be carried out from a sufficient deposit of money; and, in the next place, whether they are able to pass through the Standing Orders' Committee, or not? Unless these points are attended to, the Committee might recommend many schemes which the promoters may not be in a position to carry out; in consequence of which, other schemes which may not be open to such an objection, and which, perhaps, on the whole would be as beneficial to the districts through which it is proposed they should pass, may be rejected, and such localities lose the benefit of them. And, therefore, I would suggest that, until the Bills are brought into the House, the deposit lodged, and some progress has been made before the Standing Orders' Committee, that the Committee proposed by the right hon. Baronet should not proceed to report to the House. I am not alarmed, as the right hon. Baronet seems to be, as to the amount of money which would be required for the execution of the works before the public. This money is not going out of the country. One-fifth of all railway projects, if executed, goes, in the first instance, into the pockets of the landowner, and very likely he invests it in undertakings that pass through his district; perhaps he pays off some mortgage, or perchance he embarks it in some other railway schemes. In the next place, it must be remembered that a very large proportion of the money goes to the iron-masters and others, who have to supply materials; and then the amount expended in labour must not be forgotten; and I may remark that perhaps the best way to alleviate the distress in Ireland is by affording employment in the execution of great public works. The right hon. Baronet proposes that the amount of money shall be limited;

but who is to determine what the sum shall be? I will imagine a case: in fact I can cite one from my own district—a large district: I mean Yorkshire. A line has been projected, of which I happen to be the promoter, for 70 miles. The district is in great want of railway communication to get their produce to market; and it will be so more particularly, when the right hon. Baronet brings forward measures which the farmers and others will have to contend with; and why should you deny to those persons the execution of the proposed works, if the money and everything else is ready for the purpose? It seems giving to the proposed Committee a power which they ought not to possess. It is said that they are only to report to this House; but I have learned sufficient to know that the report of a Committee is very paramount, and it is of little use for any individual Member to contend against it. The great point to determine is, first, whether the proposed works are of national importance, and then whether they are laid out in such a manner as to secure advantages to the districts through which it is intended they should pass. If they present these recommendations, I doubt not that money will be found for the execution of all useful projects. Moreover, I have no doubt that long before they have passed through the Standing Orders of the House—long before the time has arrived for the money to be wanted, these schemes will be considerably cut down, and if they are spread over three years, they can be accomplished without any derangement of the monetary affairs of this country; if our money is not called out for other purposes—for South American bonds—and provided it does not go out to buy corn. I do not wonder that there should be some alarm at the derangement of the currency. If the prospect be that we shall have large importations of foreign grain, it will behove us to button up our pockets, and deal with the results; but the time has not arrived yet. I am, however, quite certain, that if the House will apply themselves fairly and carefully to the consideration of the different measures that will be submitted to them, this House is competent to deal with them in a manner satisfactory to the country. It is true there are defects in this tribunal, and I have myself, at times, been greatly aggrieved by some of the decisions which this House has come to; at the same time, I have, upon cool reflection, considered the decisions of the committees to be right; and I have always respected the decisions of this House; and although I am largely connected with measures that may come before Parliament, I am quite prepared to abide by the decisions of this tribunal. The principal reason for my rising, was to make the suggestions which I have thrown out; namely, that until parties were in a position to go on with their Bills in the manner in which I have pointed out, until they have deposited their plans and complied with all the Standing Orders—and it is well known that many of the plans are imperfect, and others mere duplicates—I say, until the House is satisfied of all this, it will be useless for the Committee to consider any such schemes with a view to report to the House those which are most eligible. I am, however, satisfied that the business may be got through with to the satisfaction of the public and the honour of the House.

MR. F. MAULE had readily given way to the hon. Gentleman opposite; and although the House would not be able to command his services on committees, yet, from the speech which he had just delivered, the House would see that they had gained a valuable Member in the person of the hon. Gentleman, whose experience and advice on such matters would be most important. He believed that there never had been a more important committee than that which the right hon. Baronet had proposed, and he thought it should have been selected with great care, because the right hon. Gentleman himself would admit that questions of a vast deal greater importance were to be referred to the proposed Committee than ever had been referred to a committee before; and, in fact, of greater importance than ought to be submitted to a committee at all. The right hon. Baronet proposed to submit to a committee the decision of the amount of capital which should be limited for making railways. Now this, he thought, should have come in a direct way from the Government—from the Financial Minister of the Crown, and he thought it of the greatest importance that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be placed in his official capacity on such an inquiry. He was of opinion that all portions of the Empire where railways were going on should be fairly and equally represented in that Committee. Now, he did not find that that part of the country to which he belonged was so fairly represented as it ought to be. This had, personally, no influence with him, as he had

great confidence in the names generally on that Committee; but it would have great influence with the people resident in that country. He found that the only Member on the Committee from Scotland was the hon. Member for Dumfries—a Gentleman not a native of Scotland, and non-resident in that country; and therefore, whatever confidence the people of Scotland might have in that Gentleman, he was not so well qualified as others might be to represent that country. Had the Members for Glasgow, or Dundee, or Edinburgh, been on the Committee, it would have given it that confidence which it was in the highest degree desirable such a committee should possess. He concurred with the hon. Member for Devonport (Sir G. Grey) that a commission should have the power of entering upon inquiry into matters of fact, and of discharging a great part of its heavy business; a committee made up from both Houses of Parliament, with power to make a report, which should be final, so far as all evidence was concerned. With these observations, and trusting that if the Committee was to be named, the right hon. Baronet would name such a committee as would have the fullest confidence of the country, he would leave the matter in the hands of the House; but he thought it better to protest now, rather than afterwards, against the omission of a proper representation of the country from which he came.

Mr. C. RUSSELL did not anticipate, with the hon. Gentleman the Member for Sunderland, the evil effects from the proposed Committee which had resulted last year from the decisions of the Railway Department of the Board of Trade. As he understood the right hon. Baronet, there was no similarity at all in the line of investigation. It was the duty of the Board of Trade to investigate the merits of different lines, and although they devoted vast labour and ability to it, and although he was not one of those who imputed improper motives to them in the opinions which they gave, still he thought they had undertaken a task which it was impossible for men to encounter; and they could not arrive at safe and sound conclusions upon the matters under their consideration. The object of the Committee now proposed, as he understood it, was not to investigate the merits of any particular line, but to ascertain whether it were not possible to postpone some of the measures, and to consider whether some large general, just, and universal principle might not be devised, by which they should select a certain portion of the projected railways to proceed with. Such a duty he thought it was possible for them to execute with great justice to all parties, and great advantage to the country. In such an investigation, if a preference was to be given, he trusted it would be shown to the railways of Ireland—believing as he did, that the great evils of that country resulted not so much from religious dissension or political variance, as from the destitution of the people. It would be most useful, therefore, to give them employment, especially under their present circumstances, when they were threatened with so great a calamity. He thought, in fact, they were bound to distribute some of the superabundant British capital which would be applied to the formation of railways amongst that necessitous people. He, for one, would say to the Committee—postpone as long as you can many of the proposed railways, or spread them over as wide a space of time as may be practicable; and, above all, expose and discountenance every bubble scheme which may come under your consideration.

Lord J. RUSSELL said, it seemed to him that some very important questions had been raised in this discussion. In the first place, there was the question raised by his right hon. Friend the Member for Devonport (Sir G. Grey), whether the same business which was now done by their Committees might not be done out of the House. That view had been supported by his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Liskeard (Mr. C. Buller), who appeared to him to give the proposition a very strong support; but, at the same time, his hon. Friend said, he must say that it was a question which required much deliberation; and he thought that no measure could be beneficially adopted in conformity with it without taking further time for consideration. Then there was another question raised, on which the House had heard the opinion of two hon. Members, both very well qualified to give an opinion on this subject, the hon. Member for Sunderland (Mr. G. Hudson), and the hon. Member for Reading (Mr. C. Russell). The opinions of those hon. Members differed very widely. The hon. Member for Sunderland said, that it would be a very strong interference on the part of Parliament to limit the amount of capital to be laid out in railways. He thought the very same thing; and that when all the landlords owning land along a line were

agreed to it, and the money was all ready, and everything prepared for Parliament to interfere and place a veto upon the construction of the railway, and declare the project should not be carried into effect, would be a very great interference with the disposition of capital. The hon. Member for Reading, however, said, that if so much money as would be necessary for the deposits were withdrawn from the circulation, a great derangement of the money market would take place, and much inconvenience in the labour market would be felt from making so many railways all at once; and he owned, that if that should be the case, the question became so grave a one, that he thought it ought not to be referred to this Committee in the first place, but that the First Lord of the Treasury or the Chancellor of the Exchequer should first come forward and say what were the inconveniences of this nature which they apprehended from this course, and what were the limits of it; and that then the question should be referred to this Committee. But the question, he must own, was too great, in his opinion, to be referred, in the first instance, to this Committee, consisting of a small number of Members; they ought not to be called upon to say what ought to be done, without some previous statement of this kind. Parliament did not interfere to prevent the application of capital in other directions: loans for the construction of public works in Germany, America, and other countries, were continually making by the capitalists of this country, and Parliament had not interfered. There might be some necessity for this; but he owned he thought that some strong case ought to be made before a question of such magnitude was referred to the decision of a Select Committee. If the right hon. Baronet thought that a Committee should be appointed in the first instance, he hoped at least that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be a member of the Committee, and then he could state to the Committee what measures he thought ought to be adopted, on which the Committee would report to the House. Really the question was of the greatest importance to the country.

MR. H. HINDE concurred in thinking the question was one of the greatest importance to the country; but he did not look on the Committee as an executive committee, but simply as one appointed to receive information, and report to the House, and he should not have thought it necessary to address the House had it not been for the speech of the right hon. Baronet; for he felt that if the public understood that speech as he did, and as he believed the House did, great alarm was likely to arise. He understood that the right hon. Baronet proposed the Committee should, in the first place, divide the railways now before the public into certain classes, that a map should be formed, and that the railways marked red in the map should be passed, and the railways marked blue not passed. But it must be remembered that Parliament had said this to parties out of doors, "We have laid down certain conditions; we call on you to lay down a certain amount of deposits, and that having been done, you are to consider that Parliament will be prepared to consider your projects." This being the case, he said, that Parliament could not dispose of these projects, the promoters of which had acted on the faith of this declaration without giving in each individual case to the members of it an opportunity of making out a case for themselves. He would say, prescribe the greatest strictness to the Committee in the investigations they are to institute, and let the Standing Orders' Committee be not lax in allowing companies to pass the Standing Orders; but he was opposed to so wide a departure from the system at present in force. With regard to the difficulty of dealing with this great number of railway schemes in committee, he confessed he did not feel it, for he believed that it would be found that the number of lines coming out of the Standing Orders' Committee would not so greatly exceed those of last Session as many Members supposed. The House must remember that a much greater number of railway committees might have been formed last Session than were formed. There was one other subject on which he would say a word. They would in vain try to limit the expenditure of the money of the public by saying that only a certain number of railway projects should pass; for unless they prevented persons from embarking their money in foreign railways, and other such undertakings, the only effect of the new arrangement would be to prevent the sums thus driven abroad from fructifying in this country. Although these opinions might be contrary to those of the majority of the House, he was conscious that he represented and re-echoed opinions which were widely extended out of doors.

Mr. P. M. STEWART could not wonder, after the experience of last year, at the apprehensions which some hon. Members entertained as to the possibility of getting through their business. Last year they had had a preliminary inquiry of that House, assisted by the Board of Trade, whose proceedings ran to such a length that the 20th of April arrived before a single line got into committee, and the consequence was, that, using all the despatch of which they were capable, it was impossible to get through the business. Immense as the business was which threatened them at present, he had no doubt, if they applied themselves with despatch to it, that they could get through it better than they did through the limited business of last year. He was anxious that no time should be lost, and that the right hon. Baronet should urge his Committee not to make a number of reports from time to time, but to come forth at once with their final report, that the parties before the House might know what the course of business was to be; and he must say that it was a little reflection on them as men of business, that at that time they should still be deciding upon what course they should have to take. As, however, they had not yet resolved upon a course, they must now decide what they should do; and they must remember that whatever they determined on this Session would be applicable to the Bills of next year; for they might depend upon it that next Session as many Bills would be presented for their consideration as would be brought before them this year. Were they not intersecting the country from the north to the south, and from the east to the west? The extent of turnpike roads in England and Wales was immense; and if those roads were to be replaced by railroads, it was quite clear that every succeeding Session of Parliament for a long period would bring before the House additional and necessary plans of railway lines of communication. They would require this railway communication instead of the communication by turnpike roads; and therefore he thought that they ought not to disparage this desire to provide lines of railway communication, but to hail it as a source of national wealth and power. He agreed with his hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, that the House ought not to be deterred by figures; and for his part he thought the expenditure named by the right hon. Baronet would not meet the exigencies of the case. The addition to the disposable capital of the country was 50,000,000*l.*; and how much better would it be that the investment of that capital should be in our own country than that it should be directed to other countries. He doubted much as to whether the duties which would devolve on the Committee could be discharged in such a manner, and with so little delay or consumption of time, as the right hon. Baronet anticipated. He should approve of the appointment of the Committee, if he thought that it would lead to a greater facility of proceeding with railway business by the House; but he very much doubted whether that result would follow from its appointment. He hoped that, seeing the great necessity for speed, and the avoidance of delay, which existed as regarded railway matters, the right hon. Baronet would urge upon the Committee the necessity of facilitating that despatch as far as such was possible. The House would be further convinced of this fact, by recollecting that, on Monday next, there would be upwards of thirty Railway Bills before the Standing Orders' Committee.

Mr. PLUMPTRE expressed his regret that the 30th of November, the last day for depositing the plans, should have fallen on a Sunday. If it were in the power of the Board of Trade to have prolonged the time even for one day, they ought certainly to have done so, and thereby avoided those numerous violations of the Sabbath of which they were all aware.

Mr. RICARDO regretted that none of the right hon. Gentlemen opposite had thought fit to answer the question of the noble Lord the Member for London. They (the Government) had said to many railway companies, "If you comply with the conditions which we propose, we will take care that your case shall be considered." Several companies had complied with those conditions, and it was now proposed to put those companies in the same position with those which had not complied with the conditions as they had been required. The right hon. Baronet had spoken of a map which he was to lay before the Committee; but the effect of that proposal on his mind would be, that if he (Mr. Ricardo) was concerned in a railway line, he should write to his engineer, telling him not to mind in the line which he projected tunnelling, or anything else of that nature, but to draw a straight line on the map, and the straightest line would be likely to be considered the best. The result of the course proposed would be

to encourage companies to proceed, which, in other circumstances, would have no chance of proceeding, as those which had not complied with the necessary preliminaries might proceed, with the hope of being enabled to go before the House with better chance of success in the ensuing year. He looked upon the proposal as a clumsy contrivance, and he would remark, with respect to the amount of deposits and mode of requiring them, that it would have been a great deal better if, when every project was registered, a certain small deposit were required, as in that case the deposits would be paid by the projectors of the railway companies, whereas, in the present case, they are paid by the companies. The right hon. Baronet had come before the House at the eleventh hour—[*laughter from the Ministerial Benches*]—yes, at the eleventh hour. They had made certain special arrangements last year for the guidance of those proceedings, and when those who were concerned complied with all the conditions which were required, or were prepared to comply with them, the right hon. Baronet, at the eleventh hour, came down to the House of Commons, and told them they were to make new arrangements. He hoped the right hon. Baronet would not leave so much capital in suspense, or cause any unnecessary delay or inconvenience to those great national undertakings; for, however it might be the fashion to decry them, they were great national undertakings, and he hoped the right hon. Baronet would distinctly tell the House what he meant to do.

The EARL of LINCOLN said, that the hon. Member who had just sat down, as well as the hon. Member for Nottingham (Mr. Gisborne), appeared to think that the Committee which his right hon. Friend had recommended was merely to perform the same duties as the Board of Trade had performed last year, with reference to the subject of railways. But such was not the case. With respect to the map, the hon. Member had stated that the effect of its introduction would be to induce the Committee to approve of the straightest line, without reference to other considerations. Now the object of the map was this, and the object he should remark was one which had been distinctly described by his right hon. Friend;—the map was to have three descriptions of lines traced upon it, and distinguished by three different colours: the lines in operation to be of one colour; the lines which had been sanctioned by Parliament, but were not as yet in operation, to be coloured differently; and the lines which were projected, but had not as yet received the sanction of Parliament, to be of a third colour, to distinguish them from the two former classes. With respect to the amount of capital to which the operations should be limited, the question did not rest with the Government, but it was to be brought before the Committee, and considered by them. But, in order that the fullest opportunity for coming to a proper decision might be afforded to the Committee, the Government were prepared to lay before them the conclusion to which they had arrived as to the amount of capital which ought to be named as the limit. The Government, he ought to add, would not only lay before the Committee their conclusion on that subject, but also upon other important questions connected with the matter, for their consideration. The hon. Member for Renfrewshire (Mr. P. M. Stewart), appeared to doubt the expediency of any restrictions to the amount of capital to be invested in those operations; but when they considered the number of projects—when they considered the number of Bills deposited in the Private Bill Office, he was sure that the majority of the House would agree with him in thinking that some limitation was necessary. The hon. Member appeared to think the sum of 23,000,000*l.* was insufficient. That subject would receive the consideration of the Committee; and he could only repeat, that looking at the number of projects, and recollecting the great sums which the outlay with reference to other interests would require, he thought there ought to be some limit agreed upon. Another subject which the Committee would have to consider was, as to the payment of deposits by the various companies, previously to their going before the Standing Orders' Committee; and he was sure that the Committee would dispose of it in the most satisfactory manner. He thought that these points ought very properly to be brought before the Committee. It was not the intention of the Government to throw those subjects loosely before the Committee. On the contrary, the Government would lay before the Committee the conclusions at which they had arrived with respect to them.

MR. LABOUCHERE said, that irrespective of other questions, the Committee would be called on to decide no less a question than what was the maximum sum which the Legislature would allow to be

invested in railways, in the ensuing Session of Parliament; and, he must say, that a graver question could not be presented to any assembly. That, he would say, was a question which ought not to be referred to any Committee, but which ought to be proposed by the Government to the House of Commons. It was a question upon which, if the Government had made up their minds, they ought, at the beginning of the Session, to come down, not for the proposal of a Committee, but to lay the subject directly before the House of Commons. If the Government acted in that manner, the House of Commons would be found to be the best tribunal to decide on what course to take. The right hon. Baronet opposite had done him (Mr. Labouchere) the honour of proposing him as a member of the Committee; but he would say, that, when he first heard of the appointment of the Committee, he thought that the Government would come forward with a matured scheme to facilitate the despatch of the great mass of railway business which was to come before the House in the ensuing Session. He was of opinion that, with the experience of last Session before them, they might have taken steps which would facilitate the progress of railway business in this Session. That was quite a different question from the one to which he alluded at the commencement; and he regretted very much that the question of what was to be the maximum of capital was to be brought before the Committee; for it was a question that peculiarly required to be brought by the Government before the House of Commons. The Government ought to make a proposal, and let the House of Commons judge of it. He agreed with the hon. Member for Liskeard in thinking that immense sums of money had been thrown away during the last Session of Parliament, in consequence of the want of arrangement; and that ought to form another reason for inducing them to avail themselves of the experience of last year, in order to frame a matured plan of arrangement for this Session of Parliament. There was one expression which had been used by the hon. Member, and which would lead to the idea that all the decisions come to last year were not free from suspicion out of doors. When he considered the manner in which the committees of last Session had discharged their onerous and invidious duties, he could not but hope that the impression out of doors was that they had discharged them with as clear a character as it was possible for the members of any assembly to possess. He should, indeed, be sorry if there was any impression out of doors that the Members of that House had lowered themselves, as, on questions affecting property, their decisions deserved to be looked on with jealousy; and he should regret, indeed, if Members of that House did not stand with all persons as high as their conduct had shown them to deserve. During the last Session they had to deal with questions in which the interests often of their friends or constituents were deeply concerned; and he should much regret if any party differed from him in thinking that they discharged their duties in a manner which could not be excelled by any other assembly. He should rejoice if the Committee about to be appointed would do any thing to facilitate the progress of railways in the present Session of Parliament; but if so great a question was to be involved as the discussion of the merits of particular lines, there could be little advantage or propriety in referring it to a committee.

Mr. W. R. COLLETT thought that the House had a right to ask Her Majesty's Government what was the exact proposition which they were going to submit to the Committee. He did not mean to say that he expected the Government to explain the details of the proposition; but they ought to acquaint the House with its general nature. The hon. Member for London (Mr. Masterman) had said in a former debate, on Friday last, that great inconvenience would arise in consequence of the determination of the Government to adhere to the Standing Orders with regard to deposits. He had already felt great inconvenience himself from this source, not as a railway projector, but as an humble banker; and he was quite sure that the same inconvenience must have been felt elsewhere. He wished to know whether the country was to go on much longer in the same way, as he was satisfied that every day would add to the inconvenience which had already been suffered. He should feel it his humble duty to oppose the appointment of the Committee, unless he knew the exact object for which it was to be appointed. He was still of opinion that a commission out of the House would satisfy the public more than any of the railway committees consisting of Members of the House, which sat last year; although he was sure that those Gentlemen had done their duty to the best of their ability. A commission

had already been appointed by the Government to determine the question of the gauges; and he did not see that a commission to determine the merit of the several railway projects would go much further. He hoped that if the Committee proposed by the right hon. Gentleman were appointed, they would report in a very short time, and before the time for paying in the deposits had expired. If that were done quickly, no great harm would arise; but if delay were permitted, much inconvenience must ensue.

MR. FRENCH expressed his satisfaction that the right hon. Gentleman had stated that no intention existed on the part of Her Majesty's Government to interfere with the progress of the different railway bodies, and that they would be permitted, after doing every thing in their power to comply with the Standing Orders, to proceed in the ordinary course. It would manifestly be a great act of injustice to prevent the promoters of such Bills from going before Committees of the House. Notwithstanding the very great number of plans and sections which had been deposited with the Board of Trade, he entertained no fear that those projects which would come before the Committee would be too much for the strength of the House; but of the eight hundred and odd railway schemes which had complied with this branch of the Standing Orders, he was sure that nothing like one hundred would eventually be proceeded with. When the House took into consideration the very late period of the Session when they began with the Railway Bills last year, having been obliged as they were to wait for the Report of the Board of Trade, and when they reflected that they could now begin business at a comparatively early period, he did not think there was any reason to apprehend that the House would be unequal to the task imposed upon it.

COLONEL ANSON wished to know whether the right hon. Gentleman proposed that his Committee should take evidence, in order to enable them to decide on the merits of different lines? If so, where would be the end of their labours? The Session of Parliament would be at an end before the Committee could finish what they had to do. What he would propose was, to allow the different railway schemes to proceed as before, and pay their deposits. They should also be allowed to go before the Standing Orders' Committee, and be thoroughly sifted and drafted through the ordeal there prepared for them. If they did that it would then be in the power of the House to deal with them as they thought fit. He would recommend that the Committee which the right hon. Gentleman proposed to appoint should have the power merely of grouping these railways. They could not go into the merits of each individual line, which must be decided by select committees of the House of Commons, or by a commission out of the House, which he (Colonel Anson) for one should prefer. He certainly had a very strong opinion himself on the question of interference with railways. The checks already imposed upon them would reduce the number so considerably that those which at last found themselves in a position to come before the committees would not be found too many to deal with. With respect to the railway committees themselves, he believed that the general opinion out of doors about them was, that they had performed their duties, not only with great patience, but with great ability.

MR. PARKER said, that the question really was, whether any plan could be devised for the disposal of the private business in a satisfactory manner, or whether they were to leave a greater number of remanets at the end of this Session than at the termination of the last Session of Parliament. He believed that persons interested in the success of railway projects would be much better satisfied if the House would tell them to go home and save their money, when there was no reasonable prospect of the schemes being taken into consideration, than if they were to keep them dancing attendance till July or August at an enormous expense, and after all send them home with the uncertainty whether they would ever be allowed to appear again. The right hon. Gentleman had taken a very wise course in proposing the appointment of a Committee, and he trusted that he would have the fortitude to persevere. There would be a great advantage in the present year in appealing from the railway world drunk to the railway world sober. He was quite sure that a great number of persons who had embarked in these schemes would not be dissatisfied by their postponement for a time. His view of the matter was this—that parties had planned a great number of schemes, because they knew that if they did not, others would take the ground from them. He agreed with the right hon.

Baronet the Member for Devonport, in thinking that a great deal might be done to simplify the proceedings before railway committees. His (Mr. Parker's) opinion was that a great part of the time occupied was wasted, as it was spent in proving what nobody cared anything at all about; namely, the amount of traffic on the projected line. He, for his own part, did not believe that any railway was backed because there was such traffic, or that any railway had been thrown out because the requisite amount of traffic had not been proved. It appeared to him that if the proposed Committee were to look narrowly into that branch of evidence which was now required to be proved before a railway committee, a great deal of time might be saved. He took it for granted that the first thing which the Committee would do would be to lay down some general rule for the guidance of the select committees, and he hoped that there would be some rule upon the subject of traffic. It ought not to be forgotten that the House did not sit there merely for railway purposes, as they did, in a manner, last Session. He had spent more time himself upon them than he ever meant to spend again. He did not think that there would be the smallest breach of faith committed by the House, if they did not attempt to do that which was impossible. *Nemo tenetur ad impossibilia.* Let the Committee do what was necessary to be done, and let them do it quickly.

Mr. POULETT SCROPE expressed his concurrence in the views taken of this subject by the hon. Member for Sheffield (Mr. J. Parker); and, adverting to what had fallen from the hon. and learned Member for Liskeard (Mr. C. Buller), thought it was well worthy of consideration whether it would not be advisable to supersede altogether Committees of that House as tribunals on Railway Bills, and to appoint a Government Commission for that purpose—a Commission to be composed of men who, from their experience, skill, and capacity, coupled with the position in which they would be placed, would be above all suspicion, and at the same time most competent to deal with the subject-matters which would be brought before them. He had himself been one of those patriots to whom allusion had been made, who had sacrificed eighty-four days of the last Session in a Committee on one group of Railway Bills; and hence he could fully appreciate the necessity which existed for some different arrangements. At present, if a line running to A, B, or C, stood referred to a committee, from the beginning to the end of the inquiry, all the parties who appeared before the committee addressed themselves to that body, with a view to confuse and confound the ideas of its members, and to make them incompetent to discriminate between the sound and false opinions which might be submitted to them by either side. If the same questions were submitted to a Government Commission, composed of practical and experienced persons, he had not the least hesitation in saying that such inquiries, instead of occupying eighty-four days, might be determined in a just, proper, and equitable manner in eight hours, especially if the traffic tables were deposed to by experienced and competent witnesses. Throughout the country, it was well known that the great object of the parties who appeared before railway committees was, to confuse the members. This was the practice both of promoters and opponents, and to it was to be attributed those delays which were extremely painful to all persons concerned. He, therefore, hoped that the Committee intended by the present Motion to be appointed would, amongst the other points referred to, consider the propriety of appointing a Government Commission to supersede the Parliamentary Committees, to whom the jurisdiction on Railway Bills was now, in some degree, delegated. And he would ask the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, in what way a Parliamentary Committee, consisting of five gentlemen, was superior on such subjects to other men to be found outside the walls of Parliament? On what ground could it be supposed that any committee could be superior to such a commission as could readily be constituted of men of talent and scientific experience in the country? It had been observed, that the decisions of the committees of last Session had been satisfactory to the country, and that they were above all suspicion; and the House had been reminded that, when a Member was called upon to serve upon such a committee, he was bound to declare that he was not interested in any one of the Bills which would stand referred to the committee on which he was about to serve. Still, he might be a shareholder in or a director of a railway company in another part of the kingdom, which might more or less be a rival to one of the lines upon which he was called to adjudicate; and therefore he thought that,

if the committees on railways were to continue to exercise the functions vested in them, it would be but fair, *in limine*, to exclude from serving upon them any Member who was interested in any railway whatsoever. If so, he much doubted whether a sufficient number of Members could be found who would be competent to serve. On the whole, he wished to impress upon the House that the result of his experience during the last Session was, that a committee—from want of experience, of scientific knowledge, and practical skill—was a very incompetent tribunal, and for the continuance of the system no sufficient reason had yet been given.

MR. MORRISON said, that the principal complaint was, that if the whole of the capital which would be required was to be invested in the construction of railways which were projected, that then this Committee proposed by the Government would be wholly unnecessary; but that if only a certain amount of capital was to be so applied, it was said there would be no difficulty in the matter, and that the appointment of the Committee was superfluous. His hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson), whom he rejoiced to see in the House, had stated that this country could well spare 70,000,000*l.* to be applied in the construction of railways, because the whole of that amount would be spent in the country. The argument much resembled that which had been advanced in the discussion of the Bank Charter, when it had been stated that the Bank of England could not issue too much bank paper, so long as it only discounted good bills. To that doctrine he could not assent. At present, they could not construct even the good lines projected without interfering with the application of the capital of the country to other purposes. There was too great a speculation existing as to railways, and the only way to meet the spirit of speculation which prevailed was, to bring down the profits of the capital so applied to an ordinary level; and this only could be effected by fixing a much lower rate of charges upon the different lines to be constructed. If this were done, there would be found no difficulty in dealing with the numerous lines which had been put forth to the public. The development of railway traffic during the past year would, he ventured to state, show that the railroads now constructed abroad conveyed the traffic at one-half less than the lowest scale of charges on any of the English lines. For instance, the fare from London to Dover was fifteen shillings; but cross to Ostend, and it would be found that from Ostend a distance equal to that between Dover and London could be travelled by railroad for a fare of seven shillings and sixpence. With respect to committees, he was of opinion that the information now furnished to them by the railway promoters themselves, ought to be supplied by independent persons. If a line was sought to be constructed from A to B, the committee ought to have nothing to do but to secure as much advantage to the public as was possible; whereas the practice now seemed to be, solely to protect the railway projectors; for the committee had not only to report upon the nature and extent of the traffic expected, upon the nature of the line, and on other points, but also that upon the capital to be expended there would be a dividend for the proprietors. Surely it ought to be left to the railway people themselves to take care of that. As well might it be proposed that a committee should be appointed to inquire whether or not the contractor for the building of the new Houses of Parliament had made a good bargain. Such a proposition would be absurd; and equally so, in his judgment, was the requirements from a railway committee to report as to whether a dividend would accrue to the shareholders on the capital subscribed. As to the amount of capital to be invested, he was of opinion that 20,000,000*l.* was quite as much as could be each year safely applied to such purposes. The money market last year would have fallen in consequence of these outlays, had it not been that it was a year of extraordinary profits. But if it should fall this year, from a bad harvest or any other cause—if the country should be overtaken with difficulties, in what situation would the railways be placed? They would be unable to borrow money to complete their works; and they might probably be obliged to suspend their operations for two or three years, until the money market again revived and came round. These were difficulties to which no wise Government would lend itself. One word as to the required deposit of 10 per cent. So long as that amount was paid up, plenty of engineers, solicitors, and others, would go to work, knowing that their bills would be paid; and hence it was that a vast number of Bills had been brought forward, which, under any other circumstances, would never have existed. He threw these points

out as matter for grave consideration at present.

Sir ROBERT PEEL said, nothing which had passed in that debate had tended to shake his conviction, that Her Majesty's Government had pursued a proper course in availing themselves of the earliest opportunity of calling the attention of the House to the possible difficulties in which they might become involved, unless they took immediate notice of the immense amount of railway legislation which was now impending over them. He thought it was the clear duty of Government to submit the matter to the House, without, however, proposing any final plan upon the subject. They would remember that it was one of grave import—one which involved the privileges of Parliament, and one upon which Government could not, consistently with their sense of duty, submit any elaborate scheme, without referring the matter to the consideration of the House. He conceived that the duty of Government with reference to the matter was to suggest some course, by means of which the practicability of respective schemes could be discussed ; and as that course could not be pursued with advantage in a Committee of the whole House, he proposed the formation of a Committee of those hon. Members whose attention had been directed to the subject, and who would be thus the most competent authority for discussing and reporting upon it. He was quite certain, that had he brought forward a scheme on the part of Government, objections would have been raised to the discussion by the whole House on its merits. He would have been told that he should rather have referred the matter to a Select Committee. He had anticipated this recommendation, at the same time he had thought it best not to prejudice the consideration of the Committee by stating the views of Government as to what ought to be its decision. Objections had been urged as to the appointment of such a tribunal. They had been told to wait—that they need not interfere—and that the crisis would pass away as it had arisen. But what were the facts of the case ? It had been said, that no interference was necessary ; for that not more than 100 or 200 Bills would be proceeded with. There were, however, 710 Bills deposited, involving capital to the amount of 300,000,000*l.* Of these it was possible that many would fail before the Committee on the Standing Orders. Others might fail in consequence of the necessary deposits not having been made; but he thought that, whatever might be the result of a little further delay, it was the duty of the House to apply itself early to the consideration of the subject, and not to wait, as last year was the case, until the end of the Session. The question now was, whether or not they should devolve this duty upon a Committee—and whether that Committee should at once enter upon its functions ? He had been asked to postpone the labours of the Committee until it was ascertained whether or no the promoters of the schemes destined to go before them had complied with the Standing Orders. To this course he, for one, could not consent. True, it might be the feeling of the Committee to suspend its judgment upon schemes, until it was known whether or no they had successfully gone through the ordeal of the Standing Orders. But there were many points which the Committee could at once proceed to discuss. It would be in fact the master of its own proceedings, and would determine the points to be at once gone into, and the points to be postponed. He, therefore, saw no reason for any delay in the appointment of the Committee. On the contrary he saw every reason why its inquiries should be immediately commenced. It was true, that in some quarters and by some parties, all interference was blamed. But let them recollect how the matter stood. Last Session they had not passed the Bills before them ; they had not been able to perform the functions they had undertaken. The companies had, in many cases, complied with the rules which the House had laid down; but such was the pressure of public business that Bills involving 11,000,000*l.* of capital were obliged to stand over, because no time was left for their discussion. That was one reason why they should take into early consideration the principles upon which they were to act during this Session. A cry was no doubt raised against interference with private enterprise—about the expediency of capital being allowed to be applied under the law as it at present stood. It was said, "Do not interfere with private enterprise." His reply was, "By no means; let every man apply his capital as he pleases." But the question was not as to the application of capital, but whether or not particular parties should have the right to take other persons' property on which to construct a railway, and upon it to raise a certain amount of toll. Why that was quite a different species of

interference from that which would subject to its conditions the ordinary application of capital not seeking for any peculiar privileges. Supposing the case of 300 Bills, requiring a pledge for the subscription of capital to the amount of 150,000,000*l.* to be immediately laid out; he did think that it became a matter of grave consideration, whether the House should or should not refer these 300 Bills at once to distinct committees—who would not take a preliminary view of the question, a question of such immense importance—and who would not consider to what extent privileges so immense in their nature ought, with advantage to the community, to be conceded by the Legislature. For what was the species of inquiry they delegated to the ordinary committees of the House? Why, they referred each Bill to the consideration of five gentlemen. No reference was made by the tribunal so constituted to the general interests of the country. They merely considered the probable amount of traffic on the projected line—whether in all respects the expectations of its promoters would be probably realized, whether the estimates of expense would or would not be probably exceeded. They thus reviewed only the individual merits and prospects of each scheme. They might come to the conclusion that such and such a plan deserved encouragement—that its estimates were correct—its traffic moderately calculated—that the speculation, in short, was a good one—and that there could be no objection to it. Well, all this would, in each case, be submitted to the House of Commons; but then the time would come when they ought to consider whether, after all, these Bills, advantageous as individually they might be, ought to be allowed simultaneously to pass. Already a sum of 23,000,000*l.* must, under existing legislation, be applied within the next three years; and certainly it was now open to consideration whether, by limiting the number—by deferring the consideration of some of the schemes now pressing on them—they could not apply a limitation to the amount of that capital, which, in addition to the sum already needed, would shortly be applied for. He had, therefore, felt it to be his duty to direct the attention of the House to this subject; but for the reasons which he had already alluded to, he had abstained from propounding on the part of Government any particular plan. But seeing the enormous amount of capital required, uncertain to what extent the system might be carried, they had felt it to be their duty to lay the matter before the House, with a view to any alterations in the system which it might think fit to adopt. He hoped, however, that the House would not, in any case, part with its virtual jurisdiction. Whether it might be right to devolve some portion of the inquiry necessary in each case, on some particular impartial body, he would not stop to inquire; but he did renew the expression of his hope that the House would not part with its jurisdiction in the matter—that the interference of select committees would not be done away with. He believed that the conduct of the House last Session as to railway business was greatly in its honour, and showed that the determination was deeply felt—that however great might be the press of business, the House would not and did not neglect the functions which devolved upon it with respect to private legislation. And he believed that he might say too, that though its decisions were sometimes found fault with at first by those to whom they had been adverse, the public voice was generally in favour of the integrity and justice of its votes. He should be sorry, therefore, to see the House part with or delegate its railway jurisdiction, because he feared that should the House of Lords choose to take up the functions in respect to private legislation which the House of Commons chose to abandon, the dignity of the latter could not fail to be impaired, nor its authority to be weakened. Another word as to a suggestion which had been made—that of referring certain questions of detail respecting each scheme to a Commission to be formed of men of science and practical experience and skill, competent to decide upon such points of engineering or probable traffic as might arise. Now let them recollect the immense amount of business which such a tribunal would have to undertake. There were, say 700 Bills to adjudicate upon. To do them justice, instead of one commission, twenty or thirty would be requisite, while it would be found that they could hardly repose the same confidence in so many examining bodies as they could do in one, the satisfactory composition of which would be so much more under their control. But in saying this, he was not offering any objections to the suggestion, should it be found practicable for the establishment of some tribunal to lighten the labour of committees; these commit-

tees, however, always to retain their independence, always to maintain their right to judge in a last resort, but referring to the auxiliary body the investigation of mere matters of detail. As to the general Committee, he repeated that, although there were many matters to come before it, which it might find convenient to postpone the consideration of, yet there were many other important considerations which he trusted the body in question would be enabled immediately to proceed with.

MR. J. COLLETT inquired whether the Committee was to be an open one—whether it would be competent for hon. Members to attend without taking part in the Committee's deliberations?

SIR R. PEEL was understood to reply, that the Committee would be a select and secret one.

Motion agreed to.

Committee appointed to consist of the following Members:—Lord G. Somerset, Sir G. Grey, Mr. Strutt, Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Estcourt, Mr. Greene, Mr. Ewart, Mr. Colquhoun, Mr. Hodgson Hinde, Mr. Pakington, Sir G. Clark, Mr. F. Baring, The O'Connor Don, Lord H. Vane, and Mr. Shaw.

DRAINAGE (IRELAND).

SIR THOMAS FREMANTLE rose to move for leave to amend the Drainage Acts in Ireland. It would be in the recollection of the House, that in the course of last Session he submitted certain Amendments of that Act; and he stated at that time that he was not prepared to go into the whole question, not having sufficient experience upon the subject; but having had one or two points brought under his immediate consideration, he submitted them to the House, and which were adopted. He was now prepared to submit still further Amendments to the Bill, which he hoped the House would sanction. He had thought it his duty at an early period of the present Session to bring before the House measures of this nature. He had thought that the most effectual way for improving the condition of the people of Ireland, both socially and morally, was promoting measures for their education and their employment. For these objects the Legislature had already passed various measures; it was not necessary, therefore, that he should bring forward any new measure; all that was required to effect this purpose was to extend the law already in existence. This extension might be very beneficially done. The existing Drainage Act empowered the Government to expend money for the promotion of public works in Ireland; but the grant which had been made by Parliament for that purpose was exhausted. He therefore proposed that a further sum should be paid out of the Exchequer, by which certain public works might be carried forward, public companies might be stimulated, and very considerable employment afforded to the people. He also proposed to provide for the further drainage of the land, and the rendering the rivers navigable throughout the country. He found that although the present Act was a very popular one, and that there existed a general desire that its provisions should be carried into operation, yet there were various reasons why a large number of projects brought under the consideration of the Board of Works had failed of being prosecuted. One great difficulty was in the want of sufficient security to parties who might be disposed to advance money for carrying out the works; and another difficulty consisted in the restricted nature of the powers of the Board of Works. These and other difficulties he proposed to remedy. He hoped also to take up the question of building fishery piers. This was by no means a new proposition. It had already been entertained, and he trusted the House would aid him in carrying out the object. By these various ways, in addition to the great number of railroads that were now already being constructed in Ireland, he hoped to give such a stimulus to the execution of great works of public utility in that country as should afford ample employment to the great mass of the people. If that should be the result of the labours he had undertaken, he should be gratified and rewarded. The reason why loans could at present be easily obtained for these works was, that the security had hitherto been considered incomplete. He attempted to improve it last year, and succeeded to a certain extent; he was now prepared to submit further Amendments, and to render the security most ample and complete. He proposed to adopt the provisions contained in the English Drainage Bill, which was introduced by the Duke of Richmond last Session, by which the money lent became a charge on the land prior to other incumbrances; at the same time care would be taken that the interests of mortgagees should not be interfered with. If the Commissioners under the Act were satisfied

that a certain amount of improved value would arise from these works from the drainage of them to the extent of that improved value, the lenders of the money for carrying out the drainage would have the right from year to year to receive their remuneration, while the security thus afforded by this improved value would, on the other hand, prevent any injury to any person who had a claim upon the property. It was also provided that power should be given to the party to pay off the whole advance at once if he had the means to do so. A difficulty had been experienced in finding sufficient money for the deposits required for the preliminary expenses arising from surveys, valuations, and so on. Frequently very excellent projects fell to the ground for want of sufficient public spirit to advance the money required for these preliminary proceedings; and considering the extent of the works often projected, no one could wonder at this. It was therefore proposed, in order to obviate this difficulty, that the grand jury should have the power to present a sum of money for the deposit to meet these preliminary expenses. The hon. Baronet opposite (Sir R. Ferguson) objected to this; but when he reminded the hon. Baronet that this advance of deposit would be in the nature of a loan, he thought the objection of the hon. Baronet would cease. Because, when the works, having been assented to by the landowners, had proceeded, the deposits would be repaid to the country. [Sir R. FERGUSON: If the assents were not obtained, what then?] Why then, indeed, there would be some risk; but he thought sufficient interest would be adduced to encourage the parties to enter upon these works. Besides, it was not probable that the Board of Works would sanction any undertaking that would not be of sufficient value to repay the deposits, which were merely for the preliminary expenses. There was another provision in this amended Bill. It often happened that the amount of the deposits, as estimated by the Board of Works, was expended, and the works came to a stand-still for want of a further small sum to complete the preliminary proceedings. It was therefore provided by this Bill that the Board of Works should have the power, in such case, to advance a sum sufficient for that purpose. Then came a very important alteration of the present law, upon which he might fairly expect some opposition. At present the assent of two-thirds of the proprietors was required to authorize the undertaking. Now, although the recorded assent of two-thirds could not, on many occasions, be obtained, yet it by no means followed that there was a large proportion of dissents, because a large number of proprietors would not give themselves the trouble to consider the proposal, neither assenting nor dissenting; but many of them would never oppose the project. The consequence was, that a majority of proprietors might be in favour of the work; and yet, because there was not the number required by law actually assenting, that majority was of no avail. To correct this it was provided that if the positive assent of one half of the proprietors could be obtained, the work should proceed. There was another provision with respect to navigation. Lands were often drained, the water being carried into the neighbouring rivers; and a very small additional expense might render those rivers navigable and useful for the purposes of internal communication; a power was therefore given for parties to unite themselves into a company to improve the navigation of those rivers by means of drainage. There was also one other provision. By the draining of bogs, waste lands, and moors, it might often happen that land hitherto of no value might become capable of cultivation. If so, then in case the land was untenanted, some difficulty might arise as to the parishes entitled to the reclaimed land. It was therefore proposed to give a power to the Commissioners to sell certain portions of such land, in order to reimburse the expense of draining the rest. He trusted the House would agree to these propositions, which, if adopted, must considerably improve the land and afford employment to a large portion of the population of Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman then moved for leave to bring in a Bill—

"To amend the Acts for promoting the Drainage of Lands and Improvement of Navigation and Water Power, in connexion with such Drainage in Ireland, and to afford facilities for increased employment for the Labouring Classes in Works of Drainage during the present year;"

but again rose, and said there was one very important part of the Bill to which he had quite forgot to allude. It contained a provision by which he had endeavoured to make these works more immediately applicable to the present state of Ireland. He had introduced a clause enabling proprietors to apply for the summary operation of the Bill, by which means certain preliminary forms would be dispensed with, and, by consent, improvements might be carried into effect within a few weeks, instead of

having to wait many months. Where parties were willing to apply for that power, they would have it; and by that means he considered that in the next spring and summer a very considerable extent of improvement might be effected. Those were distinct provisions, which were put at the end of the Bill, and it was in the power of proprietors to adopt them if they thought proper.

Mr. FRENCH said, that to meet the views of the right hon. Baronet, he would abstain from discussing the merits of this Bill before he saw it in print; but there were a few remarks he might make in reference to what had fallen from the right hon. Baronet. In the first place, this appeared to him to be the Bill of the Commissioners of Public Works, and not the Bill of the Government; and, had the right hon. Baronet turned his attention a little more to the subject, he would have found that it was very undesirable to entrust the working of such a measure to the Board of Works. The right hon. Baronet had stated that very numerous applications had been made, under the Drainage Bill of 1842, to the Board of Public Works, which, owing to certain accidental circumstances, had not been attended to. In this he was perfectly correct. No doubt, many such applications had been made; but the right hon. Baronet had not drawn the right conclusion from this fact. On the contrary, he knew that very beneficial drainages had been executed in King's County, in the county of Westmeath, and one in which his hon. Friend the Member for Kildare was concerned. These had been executed under the provisions of the Act of 1842, and in the most beneficial manner possible. Indeed, the greatest possible benefit had been derived from this measure; and he would state, from his own experience, as well as from conversations he had had with other proprietors, that it was a great mistake to suppose that the measure had been comparatively inoperative. In the case of one drainage in the county which he had the honour of representing, the requisite deposit was paid, and application was made to the Board of Public Works to put the provisions of the Act in force in that district. They sent down their surveyors and other officers: large sums had to be paid in the shape of fees; and the estimated expense of draining the district came to a sum over 6,000*l*. There were three very large proprietors in the district, and it appeared to their men of business to be so considerable a sum that it was thought advisable to employ the surveyors of the district to revalue the works. They were ordered to follow the lines laid out by the Commissioners; and the result was, that the proprietors themselves were now about to undertake this work; and the entire expense, as estimated by their own surveyors, who were fully competent to the task, was under 3,000*l*. As to the boon to which the right hon. Baronet alluded, in those cases where the expense was greater than had been estimated in the preliminary survey, and which the Commissioners were empowered to grant in one way or the other, that was very questionable, for the Commissioners had the power of stating what sum they would call upon the preliminary survey, and that sum had to be made up; and it would be a much fairer way for that sum to be made up by the parties interested in the improvement than by the grand juries. He did not see what the grand juries could have to say to the improvement of those districts. The right hon. Baronet would find some difficulty in levying this sum. How was it to be levied? On the county, on the barony, or on the town lands? If in either of these ways, the expense would fall on the occupying tenant; and he did not suppose it was the intention of the right hon. Baronet that these improvements should be carried out at the expense of the tenants. The right hon. Baronet said, he was prepared to afford facilities to the landlords of Ireland for carrying on improvements of this nature by giving greater facilities for raising the money, and by conducting the preliminary surveys. The right hon. Baronet said, he had taken for his model the Bill brought in last Session; but he must be aware that the facilities afforded by that Act were more apparent than real. That Act provided that certain works might be effected, and the expense of them charged to the heritors, provided those works were approved by the Chancellor or the Chief Baron of the district. The Chancellor referred the case to one of the Masters in Chancery, who reported whether the thing was fairly done; and the same process was gone through in the other cases. But no power was given to raise the money until the works were executed; so that no proprietor could avail himself of the provisions of this Act unless he had the money in hand which it might be necessary to expend. If the object of the Act was really to afford such facilities, power ought to be

given to raise the money in the first instance, and this might be done in various ways. He called the attention of the right hon. Baronet to this matter, to show that though the Bill apparently gave power at once to effect improvements, in reality this would not be done, unless the proprietors actually had the money ready to lay out, which, he was sorry to say, in many instances was not the case, so that it would be productive of no real benefit. Then the proposal to reduce the proportion of assents required from two-thirds to one-half was a very doubtful matter. It must be recollected that this provision would give a very extensive power to a certain body of men; it would, in fact, enable one-third of the proprietors of a district to check all improvement in it. Some might deny the necessity of it altogether; and others might differ much as to what was prudent, and what was not. Some might complain of the water being taken from them, and others might urge that as the land had not been meddled with from time immemorial, neither should it now. On the other hand, if they gave one-half the proprietors the power of incurring a certain expense, and compelling the others to contribute their money for the progress of such works, great dissatisfaction would necessarily arise. There might be cases of great public importance, in which it was advisable that such a power should be vested in a body, and where it was not proper that individuals should be allowed to stop the improvement of a district; but it was a power which ought to be strictly guarded; and it was a question of great difficulty how far one person should have the right to say to another, "You shall join in this work, whether you will or not." In the committee on the Bill of 1842, he believed it had been debated whether the proportion of assents required should not be three-fourths. The proposal for charging all the lands within a certain district, and putting a receiver over them, until the whole of the expense was defrayed, was also objectionable. The subject of waste lands was one of very great importance. There were nearly three millions of acres of bog-land in Ireland. In 1834, a scheme had been set on foot for reclaiming them; plans, sections, and estimates had been prepared; but everything had been lying a dead letter nearly since that time; and he should be exceedingly glad if the right hon. Baronet would turn his attention to this point, for the greatest possible advantage might be anticipated from any facilities which were afforded the proprietors for improving this enormous mass of waste land. The whole of it, he believed, was improvable; and, in one district, he had gone over the land, and had taken some trouble to check the estimates of the Commissioners, who reported that 50,000 English acres might be put in a state so as to let to tenants, by an expenditure of about 50,000*l.*, so far as drainage was concerned; and he had no reason to doubt the correctness of this statement. But he very much doubted whether the right hon. Baronet was correct in placing the entire management of this matter in the Board of Works. He had no other tribunal to suggest; but he had hoped that the right hon. Baronet was about to bring forward, as a part of his scheme, some other plan for managing these improvements. He did not think the Board of Works was very popular, either with the grand juries or with the proprietors in Ireland. He did not believe that they would facilitate an improvement, which was at this moment so desirable; and he thought it advisable that some other tribunal should be constituted, which was better approved of, and would be more generally acceptable.

SIR R. FERGUSON said he was also very sorry to find the measure of the Government gave the management of these improvements to the Board of Works; and this was his greatest objection to the Bill. The board was insufficient in numbers for a work of this nature; their surveys were too expensive; and instead of obliging and accommodating the landed proprietors, they undertook drainage whether the proprietors approved of it or not. Now, surely, drainage ought not to be forced upon the proprietors; especially when power was given to the grand juries to levy the money. He trusted that these points would be reconsidered. But he wished to ask the right hon. Baronet whether, when he talked of securing the money upon the land, he meant that it was to be chargeable on the whole estate, and whether a man's entire estate was to be dealt with in this way, to pay for an improvement on a small part of it?

SIR T. FREMANTLE said, in reply, he certainly did not think it at all requisite to depart from that security which they already had. Where parties had lent money to a landlord, or anybody else, for the improvement of his estates, it was a debt due by him; and it was certainly no

great hardship upon him to make any part of his property which was so near as to benefit by the improvement, liable to a portion of the charge. He should propose, as he had already stated, that the amount of the first charge to be levied from the land should not, in any case, exceed the amount of actual improved value which was likely to arise, and by calculation would arise, from the drainage.

SIR R. FERGUSON: There may be a great difference between what is likely to arise, and what is calculated to arise, from the improvement.

SIR T. FREMANTLE said, there might be a difference, but they must trust to the Board of Works to make proper calculations. The hon. Member opposite said that the Board of Works had too much to do, and that they could not undertake the drainage of the whole of Ireland. He quite approved of that; he did not wish them to undertake all the drainage; he should be much better pleased if the country gentlemen of Ireland would undertake the drainage of their own lands. Nothing would please him better than that. The machinery at present in existence did not work well; he should be happy if he would improve it; and if the hon. Member could devise any better plan, nothing would satisfy him more than to abandon this proposal altogether.

Leave given.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (WEDNESDAYS).

MR. CARDWELL said he did not think it necessary to say a single word in bringing forward the Resolutions of which he had given notice, except to state that he believed it would not be necessary to persevere in moving the Fourth Resolution, namely, that if a House was not formed by a quarter past twelve, it should stand adjourned. With this exception, the Resolutions he had put on the Notice were, with a few verbal alterations, precisely those he would now move:—

"That the House do meet every Wednesday at twelve o'clock at noon, for Private Business, Petitions, and Orders of the Day, and do continue to sit until six o'clock, unless previously adjourned."

MR. W. R. COLLETT said, he thought the course now proposed would be found in some respects a very inconvenient practice; he alluded to the difficulty of procuring a proper attendance of Members. The generality of the Members of this House had some kind of occupation of their own; they were persons not likely, on many occasions, to make a full attendance; and where the attendance was very small, the possibility or the probability of jobs was still greater. A second objection was—every one had expected that the right hon. Baronet would have given some information as to whether or not he intended that the committees, of which there would be a great number, should sit on Wednesday, as well as on other days. But whether the committees met or not on that day, there would be a difficulty in either case. If they did not meet, the parties interested in the different cases, and the witnesses attending there, would be put to additional and unnecessary expense. On the contrary, if the committees met on Wednesdays, hon. Members would be put to great inconvenience; they would not know whether to attend the House or the committees. He thought this would be an unconstitutional course. It was in direct opposition to one of the Sessional Orders passed on Friday night,—that the Sergeant-at-Arms should, when the House was going to prayers, give notice thereof to all the committees, and that all the proceedings of the committees, after such notice, should be declared null and void. Now, he considered it unconstitutional to require the attendance of hon. Members in two places at once. If he were appointed on any committee, whether a railway committee, an election committee, or any other, he would not attend that committee if the House was sitting: and the question before the Speaker then would probably be whether he should be committed to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, or to Newgate, for not attending. But he should certainly consider that the duty of attending the committees was merged in the superior duty of attending the House. He had asked the right hon. Baronet this question pointedly, and had received no answer; and he wished to know whether these committees were to sit on Wednesday or not.

MR. CARDWELL believed the subject explained itself. He believed a very general feeling had been expressed, on both sides of the House, that such an experiment should be tried. The hon. Member opposite had admitted that the resolutions were good in theory, but he feared they would be bad in practice. He only hoped he should be allowed to try the experiment; and if it did not answer, let it be abandoned. With regard to the latter objection about the sitting of committees, he

believed the hon. Member knew enough, from his attendance last Session, to know that, from the pressure of business, the House sat regularly in the morning; and it would be recollected that they began their proceedings by a resolution, passed every day, that the committees should have leave to sit during the sitting of the House. He hoped, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman, in deference to the experience of Members on both sides of the House, would consent to the experiment being tried.

MR. COLLETT wished to know from the hon. Gentleman whether the committees were to sit by permission of the House, or in spite of the House. Suppose the House met, and there was not a sufficient number of Members to constitute a House, were the committees also then to adjourn, because the usual resolution would not be passed, giving them leave to sit during the sitting of the House?

No answer was given to this question.

MR. HUME rose and said, he had been in a difficult position sometimes, through not knowing whether there was to be a House or not; but the difficulty started by the hon. Member was a real difficulty, and they ought to know what was to be done. It ought to be understood whether, on all Wednesdays, the committees were to sit or not. Government ought to state the view they had, and not leave it, as it was now, open to daily discussions. It was highly desirable that they should come to some understanding.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, that the committees might obtain leave to sit, as before, during the sitting of the House. If there was any objection to that course, it might be stated when the difficulty arose.

MR. HUME said, there was this one difficulty. A Member might be on a committee, and might not be allowed to leave that committee; there might be a question before the House in which he was particularly interested; either as proposing or promoting it; and he might not be able to attend in the House to promote it. In such a case, he hoped hon. Members would be assisted as much as possible by questions being postponed, for the purpose of admitting of the attendance of those who had particular business.

Resolution agreed to, as were the following:—

"Resolved—That when such business has been disposed of, or at six o'clock precisely, notwithstanding there may be Business under discussion, Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any question.

"Resolved—That whenever the House shall be in Committee at six o'clock, the Chairman do immediately report progress, and Mr. Speaker do resume the Chair, and adjourn the House without putting any Question.

"Resolved—That the business under discussion, and any business not disposed of at the time of such adjournment, do stand as Orders of the Day for the next day on which the House shall sit."

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, January 27, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—1ª. Turnpike Roads (Scotland); High Constables.

PRIVATE BILLS.—[See Tabular Synopsis at the end of the Session.]

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of the Royal Burgh of Forres, and Inhabitants of Sedburgh, for Repeal, and from Lindsey, and a great number of other places, in favour, of the Corn Laws.

AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION.

The DUKE of RICHMOND presented a petition from Ross, against any alteration in the present Corn Laws. The noble Duke proceeded to say that a gentleman of the name of Feargus O'Connor had stated in some public meeting, that he had had proposals from him (the Duke of Richmond) to induce him to desert his present principles for the purpose of advocating that of protection. He solemnly assured their Lordships that he had never, directly or indirectly, had any communication with that man—that he had never made offers to him—that he never would—and that if a man would take money to abandon his cause, he would not trust that man.

RAILWAYS.

The MARQUESS of CLANRICARDE said, he wished to put a question to the noble Earl the President of the Board of Trade. Although he was aware that without notice he could not expect a very specific answer, the question was one which he took the earliest opportunity of putting, because it related to a subject of considerable importance, namely, the progress of Railway Bills. Their Lordships were aware, by the Votes of the House of Commons, that the Government had moved the appointment of a Special Committee of that House for the purpose of considering the course to be adopted with regard to Railway Bills, which were expected to be brought before Parliament in great numbers. That, he thought, was a very bad mode of pro-

ceeding, and almost unworthy of the Government, because, in point of fact, it was merely shifting the responsibility from the Government to the House of Commons; for the Government ought to have been prepared with some recommendation on the subject when Parliament met, seeing that these undertakings had engaged the attention of the country throughout a great part of the past year. The appointment of a Committee of the Board of Trade last Session, with its limited functions, was a very unwise step. That committee had not sufficient power. If the Government was to interfere at all, which in his opinion Government ought to do, it should interfere efficiently. The noble Earl at the head of that department undoubtedly displayed great industry; but the labours of the committee over which he presided were of very little real consequence to the country, notwithstanding that the noble Earl brought to them all the diligence and talent it was possible for any person to expect. In point of fact he (the Marquess of Clanricarde) did not believe that any of the railway schemes which were thrown out, were thrown out in consequence of the reports of that committee: and the appointment of this Committee of the House of Commons would be likely rather to increase than check the desire of speculation. There would be speculation upon the chances of the success or failure of every particular railway; first as to the way the recommendation would be, and then as to the final result; and for this reason he thought the proposition a bad one. He further thought it was bad, because it would occasion delay without any real good. There was no doubt the recommendations of Government to that committee would be adopted by the committee; and if they should be so adopted, and the committee went into the whole subject, most injurious delay would be occasioned. It was with reference to this delay that he wished to put a question; but, in the first place, it would be observed, that in the course proposed their Lordships were entirely set aside. No committee had been moved for in their Lordships' House. Now, though he was aware of the technical objection, that such measures must originate in the House of Commons, he thought it was advisable their Lordships should have a voice in the course to be adopted with reference to the decision of this very important question. Under any circumstances the appointment must give rise to more or less delay. As well as he was able to gather the views of the Government, which he did not wish to be prematurely disclosed, it appeared that a certain class of railways were to be taken—some to be put forward, and others set aside for the present, or at least delayed. Now he wanted to know if any particular distinction had been made with regard to Irish railways; because although he did not agree with what had last night fallen from the noble and gallant Duke, that the evil was not so much the want of provisions as the want of employment to enable people to purchase provisions, he did think it was a main consideration, and the Government deserved credit for the steps which he personally knew they had taken in order that employment should, if possible, be found. He knew they had taken steps for this purpose, in consequence of communications he had received from the Irish Government in reference to his own county; and he thought, as the Government were desirous of providing employment, there could be no better way, both with regard to economy of the public money and advantage to the country, than by aiding, during the coming spring and summer, the completion of such works as Parliament might sanction. It was evident that if Parliament sanctioned a line of railway, the Government might, with propriety, say to the undertakers, "We will advance you money, for a certain time, free of interest, provided you begin the works immediately." But then it was of great importance that these lines should be determined upon by Parliament; and although, knowing the Irish Government were taking active measures to provide, as far as possible, employment for the people, he felt compelled to say they must be very cautious in their steps. They must be very cautious whose recommendations they adopted, and not be over hasty to adopt those which were thrown out. A hint of this nature, he knew, would be sufficient. It was of the greatest importance, then, that the railways which were to be made in Ireland should be sanctioned with as little delay as possible by the Legislature, in order to enable the Government to take the steps to which he adverted; and he should, therefore, be very glad if the noble Earl opposite could explain whether, in consequence of the appointment of the Committee, he apprehended any delay to the introduction or passing of Railway Bills for Ireland.

The Earl of DALHOUSIE begged to assure the noble Marquess, in reply to his

question, that he believed the appointment of the committee moved for in the other House of Parliament, would not interpose any delay whatever in the introduction or passing of Irish railway bills. In the first place, the appointment of the committee did not immediately interpose any delay in the ordinary course of proceeding; the ordinary committees of the other House would be appointed, and it would be open to the promoters of railways in Ireland, as to those in England and Scotland, to give their notices, and to bring their measures before the Standing Orders' Committee, as under ordinary circumstances. How far the Irish railways might be affected by the appointment of the committee, depended upon the conclusions to which that committee might come, and upon the arrangements made by the other House. He differed from the noble Marquess when he said that the appointment of this committee would, under any circumstances, cause delay in the construction of railways; but he would abstain from entering upon the discussion at present, because he intended to give notice that on Thursday next he should bring the whole question before the House.

House adjourned to Thursday.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, January 27, 1846.

MINUTES.] PRIVATE BILLS.—[See Tabular Synopsis at the end of the Session.]

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Surrey, and numerous other places, against Alteration, and from Lancaster and several other places, for Repeal, of the Corn Laws.—From Foreman of the Grand Jury of Limerick, for the adoption of Measures for the Improvement of Limerick Harbour.—From Kettering, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From Kaltray, for Remission of Sentence on Frost, Williams, and Jones.—From Richard Nash, for adopting some Remedy for the suffering occasioned by the Failure of the Potato Crop.

COMMERCIAL POLICY — CUSTOMS — CORN LAWS.

SIR R. PEEL moved that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, on the Customs and Corn Importation Acts, and that so much of Her Majesty's most Gracious Speech as related thereto be referred to the same Committee.

On the Question that MR. SPEAKER do leave the Chair,

MR. W. MILES said, he wished to ask a question, which he was quite certain would be answered by the right hon. Baronet with his usual courtesy. It was simply this—the right hon. Baronet was about to make a financial explanation, and he wished to know whether the right hon. Baronet intended to take any vote to-night? From what the right hon. Baronet had previously stated, and from the remarks made by other Members of Her Majesty's Government, the statement would no doubt be rather a complicated one; and he hoped that previously to coming to any decision, ample time would be given to the country to consider all the measures, and decide upon them affirmatively or negatively, by the means which the Constitution afforded them. Ample time, he trusted, would be given to the counties to express their opinions.

SIR R. PEEL was quite ready to give the hon. Gentleman any explanation in his power. The statement which he was about to make would be very extensive, and in some respects complicated. It would be rather a commercial than a financial statement. It was not his intention to ask the House of Commons to pronounce an opinion upon any part of the statement which he was about to make. It was his most earnest wish that the matter should be fully and sufficiently considered—that it should be judged of as a whole, as a comprehensive settlement of a great question. He, therefore, did not propose to ask any opinion whatever of the House, either upon the general propriety of the plan, or any of its details, until after the lapse of some days.

House resolved in Committee, MR. GREENE in the Chair. The following portion of Her Majesty's Speech was then read:—

"I have had great Satisfaction in giving My Assent to the Measures which you have presented to Me from Time to Time, calculated to extend Commerce, and to stimulate domestic Skill and Industry by the Repeal of prohibitory and the Relaxation of protective Duties.

"The prosperous State of the Revenue, the increased Demand for Labour, and the general Improvement which has taken place in the internal Condition of the Country, are strong Testimonies in favour of the Course you have pursued.

"I recommend you to take into your early Consideration whether the Principles on which you have acted may not with Advantage be yet more extensively applied; and whether it may not be in your Power, after a careful Review of the existing Duties upon many Articles, the produce or Manufacture of other Countries, to make such further Reductions and Remissions as may tend to ensure the Continuance of the great Benefits to which I have adverted, and by enlarging our Commercial intercourse to strengthen the Bonds of Amity with Foreign Powers.

"Any Measures which you may adopt for effecting these great Objects will, I am convinced,

be accompanied by such Precautions as shall prevent permanent Loss to the Revenue, or injurious Results to any of the great Interests of the Country.

"I have full Reliance on your just and dispassionate Consideration of Matters so deeply affecting the Public Welfare.

"It is My earnest Prayer that, with the Blessing of Divine Providence on your Counsels, you may be enabled to promote friendly Feelings between different Classes of My Subjects, to provide additional Security for the Continuance of Peace, and to maintain Contentment and Happiness at home, by increasing the Comforts and bettering the Condition of the great body of My People."

SIR R. PEEL said: Mr. Greene, whatever opinion may be ultimately formed with regard to the merits of the proposal which I am about, on the part of her Majesty's Government, to submit this night to the consideration of Parliament, I am confident that the extreme difficulty of the task which it devolves upon me to perform, and the great magnitude of the interests which are concerned, will ensure me that patient and indulgent attention without which it would be wholly impossible, either with satisfaction to myself or to the public interests, to discharge the duty which I have undertaken. I am about, in pursuance of the recommendation contained in Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne, advised by Her responsible servants—I am about to review the duties which apply to many articles, the produce and manufacture of other countries. I am about to proceed on the assumption adopted in that Speech from the Throne, that the repeal of prohibitory and the relaxation of protective duties is in itself a wise principle. I am about to proceed on the assumption that protective duties, abstractedly and on principle, are open to objection—that the policy of maintaining them may be defended—but that there must be shown to be special considerations, either of public policy or of justice, to vindicate the maintenance of them. I am about to act upon the presumption that during the last three years there has been in this country an increased productiveness of revenue, notwithstanding the remission of heavy taxation; that there has been an increased demand for labour; that there has been an increased commerce; that there has been increased comfort, contentment, and peace in this country. I do not say, that these great blessings have necessarily been caused by any particular policy which you have adopted; but this I say, that the enjoyment of these inestimable benefits has been at least concurrent with your legislation—that the policy acted on has been sanctioned by the House of Commons—the policy, I mean, of repealing prohibitory and reducing protective duties—that I am not now, therefore, by carrying out that policy about to call upon the House of Commons to recede from any course which it has taken. It is a policy which has received its deliberate and repeated sanction; and if it has been productive of public good, it will be perfectly consistent with the course hitherto pursued to persevere in that policy. At the same time, in advising the continued application of these principles, I am not about to disregard this other recommendation in Her Majesty's Speech, namely, that in the the adoption of principles, however sound, we should not be unmindful of the public credit; and that we should take care not to cause any permanent loss to the public revenue. That other recommendation also—that in the application of sound principles we should act with so much of caution and forbearance as not injuriously to affect any of the great interests of the country—will not be neglected by me. Above all, I trust, that that recommendation of Her Majesty — the confidence, rather, expressed by Her Majesty—that this great subject will receive the just and dispassionate consideration of the House of Commons, will be justified by the result. I have already stated, in answer to the question put to me by the hon. Member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles), that I do not contemplate asking the House of Commons to pronounce to-night any opinion upon the whole or any part of the proposal I am about to submit to the House. It is the wish of Her Majesty's Government, that the whole of these proposals should be deliberately and dispassionately considered. It may be possible that I am about to affect so many interests, that all may unite in the conclusion that this is a rash and improvident scheme, and ought at once to be discouraged. If that be the prevailing impression on the part of those who are about to relinquish the supposed benefit of protection, nothing will be more easy than on the first night when we approach the serious consideration of the question, to invite the House to put upon record their approbation of some principle contrary to my proposition; to meet my proposition at the outset with some such resolution, for instance, as this—not that protection to any particular branch of industry is advisable, but to resolve on a

large and comprehensive principle—that protection to domestic industry is in itself a good, and ought to be sanctioned by the Legislature. It may happen, on the other hand, that the conclusion drawn by this House and by the country may be, that, considering all the difficulties of this great question, considering the variety of opinions which exist, considering the nature of the contest which has long existed, and which I fear will long continue, unless a satisfactory and real adjustment take place—it may be that even those who dissent from particular parts of the great scheme which I am about to submit to the notice of the House, may be disposed to accept it as a whole, and that the voice of the country may pronounce this opinion—"Upon the whole this is not an unjust, unequitable, or unwise adjustment, and rather than continue a perpetual conflict we are ready to receive this as a settlement." If this be the conclusion to which the general opinion of the reasonable and intelligent of all classes shall tend, in that case I shall have the confidence of ultimate success. On the other hand, as I said before, if you touch so many interests by the application of that great principle, that protective duties are not in themselves abstractedly good, and ought to be relinquished—if all those interests should unite in opposition to my proposition—in that case, another fate will await it, and the sooner it is disposed of the better will it be for the public interests. Sir, that principle to which I have referred, namely, the relaxation of protective duties, I am not about to apply to any one particular class. I am not about to select that great interest connected with the agriculture of the country, and call upon the landowners to relinquish protection, unprepared at the same time to call upon other protected classes to relinquish protection also. In the confidence that the principle for which I contend is a just and a wise one, I ask all protected interests to make the sacrifice, if it be a sacrifice, which the application of that principle will render necessary. Sir, the House is aware that, during the last three years, the whole scheme of the Customs Duties has been submitted to the review and consideration of the House. In the year 1842 it was my duty, as the organ of the Government, to propose a great change in the then existing Customs of the country. The general plan upon which I then acted was, to remit the duties upon articles of raw material, constituting the elements of manufacture in this country. The principle of it also was to subject in general manufactured articles, the produce of the labour of other countries to duties not exceeding 20 per cent. Not only in the year 1842, but at a subsequent period, the House adopted the principle upon which it acted in that year. Notwithstanding the apprehensions of a failing revenue, we did select some great articles, being raw materials, for the remission of taxation. In 1844, we reduced altogether the duty on wool. In 1845, we reduced altogether the duty on cotton; and there hardly remains any raw material imported from other countries, on which the duty has not been reduced. The manufacturers of this country have now, therefore, an advantage which they have not hitherto possessed. They have free access to the raw materials which constitute the immediate fabric of their manufactures. I am entitled, therefore, to call on the manufacturers to relinquish any protecting duties they may still enjoy. I think there might have been great doubts whether or not you might not have continued to derive the revenue heretofore derived from the duty on the import on cotton wool, even if the duty which existed in 1844 had been continued. But the House appeared to feel that, with the continuance of peace, there would be no formidable competition in that branch of our manufactures. They disregarded the consideration of some 600,000*l.* or 700,000*l.* of revenue. They wished to establish the prosperity of that great staple manufacture of this country—the cotton manufacture—on some sure and certain foundation; and they willingly, therefore, consented to forego an amount of duty, so easily levied and causing so little complaint from the great body of the people, without minute inquiries into the effects of the duty; and both with regard to sheep's wool and cotton wool they consented to the abolition of the duty, subjecting the opulent classes to the imposition of an Income Tax out of consideration for the permanent prosperity of our manufactures. Sir, I propose, in taking the review of duties still existing, to which we are invited by Her Majesty, to continue to act upon the principle which this House has sanctioned; and I take in the first instance, those articles of raw material which still remain subject to duty. I mean to deal with them in order still further to enable me to call on the manufacturer to relax the protection he still enjoys. Sir, there

is hardly any other article of the nature of a raw material which is now subject to duty except tallow, and perhaps I ought to add, timber. With respect to tallow, which is of the nature of a raw material, and which is largely used in many manufactures of great importance to the comfort of the great body of the people, such as soap, candles, and other articles, I propose to begin by a reduction of the duty on that article. Russia is the country from which chiefly our import of tallow is derived. We import also some from the United States. At present, the duty on tallow is 3*s.* 2*d.* per cwt. The subject was adverted to in the course of the discussions on the Tariff; and, mainly with a view to our own interests, but partly for the purpose of encouraging Russia to proceed in that liberal policy of which I trust she has given some indication, I propose, without stipulation, that England should set an example by a relaxation of those heavy duties, in the confidence that that example will ultimately prevail; that the interests of the great body of consumers will soon influence the action of Governments; and that by our example, even if we don't procure any immediate reciprocal benefit, yet, whilst by a reduction like that we shall, in the first instance, improve our own manufactures, I believe we shall soon reap the other advantage of deriving some equivalent in our commercial intercourse with other nations. I propose, therefore, to reduce the duty on tallow from 3*s.* 2*d.* per cwt. to 1*s.* 6*d.* I am taking the articles which are of the nature of raw materials. Now, with respect to timber: I don't mean to except the duties on timber from the review I am about to undertake. We have admitted timber the produce of our colonial possessions to be imported at a nominal duty; I am about to affect domestic interests by the relaxation of protective duties; and we have a perfect right, I think, if they be protected, to affect colonial interests. Timber is the only article respecting which I have some doubt. It is a very difficult question. I am prepared to make a definite proposal with respect to every other article. I know the advantage of early communication—that communication shall take place—but I am most anxious, in effecting reductions of the duty on timber, to insure to the consumer the benefit of the whole change. The course which Government will probably take will be a gradual reduction of the existing amount of duty, where it shall rest a certain time, lower than at present; the reduction being so apportioned, if possible, as to prevent any derangement of internal trade, by inducing parties to withhold the supply of timber in the hope of realizing a large amount of duty, and yet at the same time, as the importation of timber from the Baltic partakes in some respect, from the nature of the article, of a monopoly, to take care the reduction of duty should be an advantage not so much to the producer as to the consumer. In a day or two, after the opportunity of a more minute consideration of details, the intention of the Government with regard to timber shall be made known. The subject, I have said, is a very complicated one; and it is very difficult to get the requisite information, as it is absolutely necessary to keep your intentions a perfect secret before you announce your plan. I trust, however, the House will be satisfied with my general expression of our intention to make a gradual reduction of the duty on timber spread over a certain number of years; but three or four days must elapse before we can more specifically announce our plan. These are reductions only, they are not the repeal of duties on articles of the nature of raw material. With these exceptions, I hardly know a raw material in respect of which there will remain any duty. Having now taken that course, having given the manufacturer the advantage of a free command, without any impost, of the raw materials which enter into his fabrics, I call upon the manufacturers of the three great articles which enter into consumption as the clothing of the great body of the community, to give that proof which I am sure they will give of the sincerity of their convictions as to the impolicy of protective duties, by consenting to relax the protection on their manufactures. The three great branches of manufacture of which I speak, are those which are immediately concerned with the clothing of the great body of the people—I speak of the linen, the woollen, and the cotton manufactures. I ask these manufacturers at once to set the example to others by relaxing voluntarily and cheerfully the protection they enjoy. Sir, an hon. Friend of mine, the Member for Dorsetshire—and I assure him I shall still call him my hon. Friend, for it shall not be my fault if any unfortunate differences on political subjects interfere with private friendships; without any of the reserves and restraints which appear to embarrass him, I, therefore, at once call him by that appellation by which

I have always addressed him—my hon. Friend expressed a hope, being jealous of the expressions in the Speech, that the small interests of the country would not be forgotten. My hon. Friend said, "Her Majesty is solicitous that the great interests of the country should not be injuriously affected, but nothing is said of the smaller interests." Now, I do not mean, in this review of the Tariff, to subject myself to the imputation to which I was subjected before. I mean to affect great interests, and, if possible, to treat with forbearance and consideration the smaller interests. I shall, therefore, fulfil my hon. Friend's views and gratify his expectations, by assuring him that he will have no cause to complain that while the great interests are affected, the smaller interests are neglected. For instance, in dealing with the clothing of the great body of the people, I shall call on the manufacturers of the great articles of cotton, woollen, and linen, to relinquish that protection which they at present enjoy; but with regard to those articles which are made up, and which consequently employ the labour of the industrious classes of this country, I shall propose to treat them with more forbearance, and to continue some protective duty. As the case now stands, the great articles of the cotton manufacture, such as calicoes, prints, &c., are subject to a duty of 10 per cent. on importation; while cottons made up, such, for instance, as cotton stockings, &c., when brought from abroad, are subject to a duty of 20 per cent. With respect to cotton manufacture generally, which is now subject to a duty of 10 per cent., I propose that it should be imported duty free; and that duty of 20 per cent., which now applies to the manufactured articles of cotton in a more advanced state, I propose to reduce to 10 per cent. That is to say, that on the great articles of cotton manufacture, which constitute the articles of clothing for the great mass of the people, there will be no import duty; while the import duty on cotton articles in a more advanced state of manufacture will be 10 per cent. [A VOICE: Take it all off: *interruption.*] The only favour I ask is, that I may be permitted to state the whole of the plan, without any inferences being drawn at once as to any particular parts. I may have to make qualifications—to adopt precautions, and the first part of my proposal may give rise to erroneous conclusions, unless judgment be suspended until the whole is explained. All I ask, therefore, is, not even that you should suspend your judgment to a future day, but that you should wait until I conclude my observations. I am the more anxious to call on the manufacturers to set this example of relinquishing protective duties, because, according to a very high authority, it was not the agriculturists, but the manufacturers, who called on the Legislature, in the first instance, for protective duties. It was the mercantile and manufacturing interest which set the example of requiring protection; and it is therefore but justice that they should set the example, as I doubt not they cheerfully will, of relinquishing that protection. Nothing can be more remarkable than the observation made by one who had no prejudices in favour of the agriculturists. Dr. Adam Smith, speaking historically, says—

"Country gentlemen and farmers are, to their great honour, of all people the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly."

I am speaking now of the origin of this protection; and at any rate Dr. Smith was a most impartial authority, with no leaning or bias towards the agriculturists. Speaking as an historian he states what, in consequence of the interruption I met with, I have the pleasure of repeating, that it was not the agriculturists who are responsible for the restrictive system, but the manufacturers. He says:—

"Country gentlemen and farmers are, to their great honour, of all people the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly. Dispersed in different parts of the country, they cannot so easily combine as merchants and manufacturers, who being collected into towns, and accustomed to that exclusive corporation spirit which prevails in them, naturally endeavour to obtain against all their countrymen the same exclusive privilege which they generally possess against the inhabitants of their respective towns. They accordingly seem to have been the original inventors of those restraints upon the importation of foreign goods which secure to them the monopoly of the home market. It was probably in imitation of them, and to put themselves on a level with those who they found were disposed to oppress them, that the country gentlemen and farmers of Great Britain so far forgot the generosity which is natural to their station as to demand the exclusive privilege of supplying their countrymen with corn and butcher's meat. They did not perhaps take time to consider how much less their interest could be affected by the freedom of trade than that of the people whose example they followed."

This extract may excite the laughter of some Gentlemen on the other side of the House; but I believe the statement to be perfectly correct, that restrictions did not originate with the agriculturists, but were pressed on the Legislature in the first in-

stance by the mercantile and manufacturing interests; and that the principle was afterwards adopted and extended, as a necessary consequence, by the agricultural interest. I may therefore invite, in the first instance, the manufacturing interest to relinquish protective duties. I propose also to call on the manufacturers of linen and woollen, the two other great articles in addition to cotton concerned in the production of the clothing of the great body of the people, to relinquish, as I believe they can without injury to themselves, protection with respect to the coarser articles of their manufacture. There will be some loss to the revenue by these reductions; but I believe that the importation of some articles, competing with the production of our manufacturers, will stimulate their skill; and with the capital and enterprise of this country, I do not doubt but that they will beat foreign manufacturers. At present, woollen goods which are made up are subject under the reduced Tariff of 1842 to a duty of 20 per cent.; and I propose that, as in the case of made-up cotton goods, the duty on those should be reduced from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent. In the cotton and woollen trade we have given to the manufacturers the unrestricted power of importing the raw material. The same may be said with regard to the linen manufacturers. Flax is free from any duty. I had occasion to say the other night that there is no duty whatever on the import of foreign flax. I propose that in the case of linen as in the case of cotton and woollen, the coarser articles of manufacture — those which are used by the great body of the people—should be permitted to come into the country duty free. With respect to the made-up articles of linen—there are some very fine, some not of general consumption, but partaking of the character of luxuries, such as cambrics, &c., and other articles used by the rich; but I do not propose even with respect to them to maintain the present amount of duty, but to place them all on a level with the manufactures of wool and cotton. I propose that the amount of the duty now levied on made-up linens should be reduced one-half. There is another article which does not fall within these principles, but with respect to which I think it of great importance, not that we should adopt the same principle, but yet apply to it a great reduction of duty—I allude to silks. The existing duty on silks apparently operates as a protection to the domestic manufacture. You have a duty, which is called one of 30 per cent., but which with respect to many articles is a great deal higher: and a false reliance is placed on that as a protection. It is no such thing. There are many houses in Paris and on the coast which will guarantee the delivery of goods in London at one-half the duty. The high duty is, therefore, a clear loss and encouragement to smuggling; and it is also a delusion on the part of the labouring classes employed in the silk manufacture to suppose that they enjoy a protection, of which they are in reality robbed by the smuggler and dishonest consumer. I conceive, by a new arrangement with respect to the silk duties—by a reduction of the amount of the duty levied on silks, we are not interfering with any domestic interests; but we shall, I believe, stimulate skill and industry in this country; we shall diminish the profits of the smuggler, and encourage lawful and innocent traffic instead of one that is immoral and degrading. The general impression is, that the duty is only 30 per cent. on silk manufactures. I hold in my hand an account of the duties on silk manufactures; and though in respect to some the duty may not exceed 30 per cent., and in respect to others it may be less, yet there are many articles in respect to which the duty is much higher. In the case of crape, the duty is not less than from 43 to 50 per cent.; on velvet, from 34 to 50 per cent.; on silk net, from 36 to 78 per cent.; on manufactured bonnets, 145 per cent.; and on turbans, or caps, at least as much. Does any man believe that a French turban, or cap or bonnet, pays that amount of duty? It is no such thing. The article is in common use, but it is introduced by the smuggler. I propose a new arrangement with respect to silks, but I must not at present enter into too much detail. Of course, every proposal I make will be in the hands of hon. Members to-morrow morning. With respect to silks, I propose to adopt a new principle. I propose, instead of the system now in operation, of high duties, after a general review shall be made, enumerating each article of silk manufacture, to impose on it a duty of so much per lb., or to an amount not exceeding 15 per cent. for every 100*l.* in the value of the imported goods. The general principle, therefore, will be the adoption of a duty of 15 per cent. instead of that variable and capricious duty which is called 30 per cent., which is less on some articles, but which is vastly

more on others. Now there is another manufacture which enters into competition with a manufacture of this country, and on which the duties are, I think, quite extravagant. I believe that a qualified admission of the foreign article will do no injury to the manufacturers of this country, while it will be likely to stimulate skill in improving our manufactures. But at any rate, I think, that after the concessions that have been made, the manufacturer here will have no right to claim the enormous amount of duty which is at present in force. I am alluding to the duty on stained paper, or as it is called paper-hangings. There is now a duty of not less than 1*s.* per square yard applied indiscriminately to all paper-hangings introduced into this country from abroad. Now I believe it is possible to sell for a farthing per square yard some descriptions of that paper. The very finest paper—a paper with gold embroidery—might possibly pay that duty of 1*s.* per square yard. But as some papers cost not more, I believe, than one farthing per square yard, the uniform duty of 1*s.* must be considered exorbitant. I propose, therefore, to reduce the duty on paper-hangings imported from abroad from 1*s.* to 2*d.* the square yard. I approach now those manufactures which are connected with metals. [*A laugh.*] Really it is impossible to give the necessary explanations upon those subjects without going into details, which may perhaps be calculated to excite the risibility of some hon. Gentlemen. I must say, however, that I consider it my duty to enter into these details on this occasion. Now with respect to metals, we have greatly reduced the duties on foreign ores; and if we have any manufacturers who ought to compete with foreigners it is the manufacturers of metals. Speaking generally, all manufactures of metals are now charged with a duty of 15 per cent. *ad valorem.* Now I propose, with respect to them, as well with respect to all other manufactured articles which I do not specifically mention, that the general rule hereafter shall be that no duty shall exceed 10 per cent. The maximum duty, therefore, on all foreign articles, that I do not specifically enumerate, shall be, as a general rule, 10 per cent.; so that with respect to the great mass of manufactures subject to a duty of 20 per cent. by the Tariff of 1842, I propose, as a general rule, that 10 per cent. shall be the maximum duty. It is of course, however, impossible that I could enumerate every article, as I have done in the case of paper-hangings, which I mean to except from that general rule. Within that 10 per cent. duty will fall all such manufactures as those of brocade, of earthenware, and other articles; and also all manufactures of hair. At present there is a duty of 20 per cent. on the import of foreign carriages. Now I consider the whole of those alterations to be a series of equivalents. I am giving advantages to the consumers of this country by the reduction of duties; and I will venture to say that there are no articles here so extravagantly dear as carriages. I am speaking of the prices of carriages in London, as compared with the prices not only in Brussels and other foreign towns; but as compared with the prices in Edinburgh, and some other parts of this country. I must say, that the prices here are most exorbitant; and, considering the command that we have of metal, and our great skill and capital, I see no reason why foreign carriages imported into this country should be subject to a duty of 20 per cent. I propose, therefore, to encourage a competition among the manufacturers of carriages in this country by permitting foreign carriages to come in on paying a duty of 10 per cent. There is another article on which I propose a considerable reduction of duty. I propose to reduce the duty on candles of all descriptions. We have already reduced the duties on wax and on spermaceti; and I propose that the duties which are now levied on candles of all descriptions shall be reduced to one-half of the present amount. I propose also that the duties on foreign soap shall be reduced to one-half of the present amount. I propose that in the case of hard soap, which is now subject to a duty of 30*s.* per cwt.—I propose, that on account of the excise duty upon soap in this country, the duty shall be reduced from 30*s.* to 20*s.*; that in the case of soft soap, the duty shall be reduced from 20*s.* to 14*s.*; and that in the case of Naples soap, the duty shall be reduced from 56*s.* to 20*s.* I really feel it necessary on this occasion to enter into these minute details, although many of the articles may appear to be of comparative unimportance. There are a great many articles on which I propose to remit the duty altogether. I propose, notwithstanding the great simplification that has been effected in the Tariff of 1842—I propose to carry simplification still further. There were, I think, not less than 1100 articles included in the

Tariff, and they still remain there; because it is convenient to the Custom-house officers to take the articles in the alphabetical order, and see whether or not they are to be admitted duty free; but, with respect to 500 of those articles, although they may stand in the Tariff for the convenience of the Custom-house officers, there is actually no duty levied on them. I propose to extend the same principle to many articles still remaining in the Tariff; and subject to a small duty, by admitting them duty free. There are some manufactures still remaining, with which I must deal specially—that is to say, which on account of the present amount of duty, or on account of the nature of the articles, it may not, I think, be advisable to subject to the general duty of 10 per cent. With respect to all articles connected with the manufacture of leather, we propose to make great reductions. I take the important articles of boots and shoes. You have removed the duty on raw hides, and they are now admitted duty free. You have also removed the duty on almost every article connected with the tanning process; and there is scarcely any duty imposed upon any article connected with the leather trade. I propose, at present, to remove the duty altogether on one article that partakes more of the character of a raw material than of a manufacture—namely, dressed hides. I propose, with the view of reducing the cost of an article of clothing which is of great importance and of increasing importance to the working classes of the community—I mean the article of boots and shoes—I propose to take off altogether the duty on dressed hides. Then there will not be one single raw material which the manufacturer in leather cannot command without the payment of a duty; and having done that, I propose to diminish the duty on foreign boots and shoes imported into this country. I must here state, that the prices of boots and shoes in this country at present appear to be unreasonably high; and there cannot be any article of greater importance, or more essential to comfort. I propose, therefore, after having taken off the duty on the only remaining article connected with the leather trade that partakes of the nature of a raw material—I propose to reduce the duty on what are called boot fronts from 3*s.* 6*d.* to 1*s.* 9*d.* per dozen pair; to reduce the duty on the larger boot fronts from 5*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.* 9*d.*; to reduce the duty on boots from 1*l.* 8*s.* per dozen pair to 14*s.*; and to reduce the duty on shoes from 14*s.* to 7*s.* per dozen pair. The duties on the shoes of women and children will follow the same proportions. I propose also to reduce the duty on foreign hats. I also propose now to carry into effect a reduction which was postponed in the year 1842—and, I am afraid, not wisely postponed—I mean, the duty on straw plait. I propose to reduce the duty on straw plait from 7*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* per lb., and the duty on straw hats from 8*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* per doz. I said that I intended to propose a reduction on the duty on silk manufactures; but I propose also to reduce the duty on what I consider a raw rather than a manufactured article connected with the silk trade —I mean dyed thrown silk. I think it right to reduce the duty on that article. I think I am convincing the House that I am disposed to act fairly and impartially in respect to the application of this principle of the reduction of protective duties. I believe I have exhausted every article which can be called an article of manufacture, as the word "manufacture" is generally used: and I have stated the general principles on which I propose to act in respect of all articles of general use and consumption. I come now to an article of great importance, which, although a manufacture, yet in common parlance does not generally fall within the denomination of a manufacture. It is an article in respect to which I think the time is come when a reduction ought to be made. I propose to reduce the duty on brandy and foreign spirits. The present duty on foreign brandy is not less than 22*s.* 10*d.* per gallon. It is an almost necessary article, and yet the heavy duty has prevented any increase of consumption. At the present moment, I believe the consumption of French brandy in this country is not so great, or not greater, than it was at the latter end of the seventeenth century. I think that is mainly attributable to the exorbitant amount of duty compared with the value of the article. Now brandy, like silk, is an article in respect to which the present protecting duty is delusive. There is no article, speaking of our intercourse with the Continent, in respect to which smuggling prevails so much as in this article of foreign spirits. A diminution of duty, therefore, is not necessarily a diminution of protection to the native producer. It may tend to prevent smuggling, and convert an unlawful into a lawful traffic; but a diminution in the duty is not necessarily a diminution of protection. I pro-

pose, therefore, that the present duty on brandy, geneva, and foreign spirits generally, should be reduced from 22*s.* 10*d.* to 15*s.* per gallon. There remains one article to which I will now advert, and in respect to which an arrangement was made only so recently as last year, but which I also intend to submit to the consideration of the House, and to include amongst the articles on which I propose to make a reduction of the protective duties. I allude to the article of sugar. I do not wish—indeed it would be, of course, impossible for me now to enter into detail on matters, each of which must become the subject of a long discussion. I submit to the House in outline at present the intention of Her Majesty's Government, avoiding details. I fear the proposal I am about to make may not at all meet with the approbation and concurrence of those hon. Gentlemen who cheer my announcement respecting sugar. Last year I estimated the probable amount of increased consumption of sugar, in consequence of the reduction of duty, at 50,000 tons. The accounts for last year show an increased consumption of less than 32,000 tons for the remaining months of that year; whether or no during the period which would complete a twelvemonth, there will prove to be so much increase as to bear out my calculation, I cannot undertake to say; still, there cannot be a doubt that there will be a very considerable increase in the consumption of sugar. The amount of free-labour sugar brought into competition with British colonial sugar, has not at all equalled my expectations. I calculated the amount of free-labour sugar, if I recollect rightly, at 250,000 tons; but the amount actually brought in for home cousumption has fallen far short of that. I believe the defalcation may be accounted for chiefly by the failure of the crop in Cuba, and by the consequent increased price of sugar on the Continent of Europe, and the diversion thither of supplies which would have been brought to this country from other parts of the world in which there is free labour. I believe it can be shown, when this subject is further discussed, that this will account, in a great measure, for the diminished supply. Still, I am bound to say, I think British colonial sugar can bear increased competition with sugar the produce of free labour. I am not prepared to make any departure from the principle which I maintained last year with respect to the admission of sugar the produce of countries carrying on the Slave Trade. I still contend for that principle; but with respect to sugar the produce of free labour, Her Majesty's Government have not thought it right to exempt that article from the application of the principle which they propose to lay down with respect to other articles. We propose, therefore, assuming that the competition is to be with sugar the produce of free labour, to deduct 3*s.* 6*d.* from the amount of the present differential duty. In the case of Muscovado sugar, the amount of differential duty is, I think, 9*s.* 4*d.*; in the case of clayed sugar, the amount of differential duty is 11*s.* 8*d.* We propose to deduct from the amount of differential duty in the case of each description of sugar 3*s.* 6*d.*, leaving the amount of differential duty in favour of British colonial Muscovado sugar, competing with sugar the produce of free labour, at 5*s.* 10*d.*; and in the case of the finer, or clayed, we propose to reduce the differential duty from 11*s.* 8*d.* to 8*s.* 2*d.* Now, in continuing this review of all the articles—at least almost all articles on which import duties are levied, I come to those articles which are connected with agriculture. There are many articles of first-rate importance on which there are very heavy duties, but on which these heavy duties do not operate as a protection. I will take the article of tobacco. In making the extensive changes which, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, I now propose, I do hope that public considerations will have due weight, and that we shall not allow ourselves to be persuaded, however cogent the arguments in favour of reduction on particular articles, into a forgetfulness of these considerations. I hope the House will bear in mind the importance of not breaking down the public revenue. The pressure this year upon the revenue, on account of the reductions which I propose, must be very great. Considerations of public interest—considerations of national defence, leave us no alternative but to propose an increase in the Estimates. The House will bear in mind that I am on the one hand proposing reductions which will cause for the present considerable defalcations of revenue; and, on the other hand, it has become, in our opinion, our duty to propose, not with any hostile intentions, but for the purpose of provident considerations of defence, a considerable increase in the Estimates. I wish these two facts to be borne in mind; and if there are duties extravagantly high still remaining on some of the great articles of

consumption, I hope the House will not press for a simultaneous reduction of all. I will first refer to those articles of agricultural produce which are not immediately connected with the food of the people. I take, in the first instance, seeds of grasses and other seeds. I have a deep conviction that the reduction of duty upon agricultural seeds is far from being a removal of protection on agriculture, but on the contrary, will confer a benefit upon that interest. I take the article of clover seed for instance. Surely it would be impossible to maintain that the heavy duty which some years since applied to clover seed operated as a protection to agriculture. In many parts of the country the duty on clover seed is, in point of fact, a heavy burden. Before 1843, if I recollect rightly, you had a duty on clover seed which produced an amount of not less than 144,000*l.* What a small portion of the agricultural districts of this country was benefited by the levy of that duty! Clover seed is required in those parts of the country where agriculture is most advanced; clover seed is required as conducive to the most improved system of agriculture. In some few counties of England clover seed is produced, but, speaking generally, the duty levied upon clover seed is not a protection, but a burden to agriculture. With respect, then, to all agricultural seeds generally, not for the removal of protection, but as a benefit to agriculture, I propose to reduce the duty, and to apply to all a moderate duty. The duty on clover seed was reduced one-half in 1842; at a previous period it had reached nearly 150,000*l.* in one year; last year it was 75,000*l.* As I have reduced the duties on the great mass of manufactures, generally speaking, to a uniform duty of 10 per cent., so with respect to all seeds, for the purpose of simplifying the matter, I propose that the duty generally shall not exceed 5*s.* per cwt.; that that shall apply to clover seed and to all seeds. In the case of leek and onion seed, the duty at present is not less than 20*s.* I propose with respect to all seeds, that the maximum duty shall be 5*s.* I have already spoken of that most important department of agriculture, the fattening of cattle. I believe it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of promoting the fattening of cattle, as instrumental to an improved system of agriculture. The restoration of the fertility of the soil by means of manure is one of the most bountiful of the dispensations of Providence, and I believe that there is no manure, bring it from where you will, which, in respect of its fertilising qualities, can enter into competition with that directly derived from the soil. You cannot conduce more to the improvement of inferior soils than by encouraging the feeding and fattening of cattle, and thus permitting the application of the manure to the increased fertility of the soil. I propose, therefore, that one article of grain, which, I believe, may be applied to the fattening of cattle, shall hereafter be imported duty free; it is an article, however, of immense importance—I mean maize or Indian corn. I propose that the duty on maize shall hereafter and immediately be merely nominal. Now, Sir, I do not consider that by removing the duty on maize —I do not consider that I am depriving agriculture of any protection. Maize is generally used, I believe, in the United States; it is certainly used principally as human food, but its utility as human food is very much disregarded in this country. There are parts of the Continent in which it is made into most excellent food, and there are parts of the United States in which it is preferred to some of the food we use in this country; but I do believe that, by the free importation of maize, so far from doing a disservice to agriculture, by promoting the feeding of cattle an advantage rather than a disadvantage will be gained. I propose, also, that the article of buck-wheat shall be subjected to the same nominal duty as maize, and that the flour of maize and buck-wheat also shall be admitted free of duty. I propose also that the meal of these articles shall be admitted on the same terms as the grain itself. And if any hon. Gentleman will ascertain the enormous sums which are now paid by many of the best farmers of the country for the purpose of procuring linseed cake and rape cake, I think he will agree with me, that increased facilities for procuring articles used for the fattening of cattle will be of no disservice to the agriculturists. The demand for this linseed cake is so great, that it is gradually rising in price, and the consumption on some farms is immense. On some farms I believe the chief object of its consumption is to provide manure for the better cultivation of the soil. The price of linseed cake, with which I will trouble the House, per ton, in 1843 was from 9*l.* to 10*l.*; in 1844 it was 10*l.* to 10*l.* 10*s.*; and in 1846 it was 12*l.* to 12*l.* 5*s.* The price of rape cake per

ton in 1843 was 5*l.* to 5*l.* 4*s.*; in 1844 it was 5*l.* 5*s.* to 5*l.* 10*s.*; in 1845 it was 4*l.* 5*s.* to 4*l.* 10*s.*; and in 1846 it had risen from 5*l.* in 1843, to 5*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* and 6*l.* Sir, I hold in my hand a letter from a merchant, strongly recommending, on account of its advantage to the agricultural interest, that there should be a free import of some articles used very generally in the United States for the fattening of cattle. He says:—

"Sir—I take the liberty of submitting to your inspection a small sample of an article called 'rice-feed,' which is very extensively used in the United States for the feeding of cattle. We apprehend that the Act 9th Geo. IV. applies to this article, and would therefore submit to your consideration whether the interests of the farmer may not render a cheap supply of it very desirable. It is the refuse of rice ground up, and is less costly than linseed-cake, which is admitted free of duty. It is an article admirably fitted for the feeding of cattle; but, as it is meal, and not grain, it is excluded, under the operation of that Act."

Now, Sir, I apprehend the admission of many articles of this kind, enabling us to enter into competition with the feeders and fatteners of cattle abroad, so far from being a disservice, will prove an advantage to agriculture. Sir, I come now to the consideration of those articles of agricultural produce which are immediately connected with the food of man; and this is the part of this great subject on which, of course, I anticipate the greatest difference of opinion. I have to meet, on the one hand, those hon. Gentlemen who are for no delay or no qualification in the abolition of those duties; and, I have to meet, on the other hand, those who insist that there shall be no relaxation of the present amount of protection to agriculture. My object will be, if possible, to submit to the House some adjustment of this question, on which both sides, now so divided in opinion, may concur. I know that neither side will approve of it; I know that I must meet with the disapprobation, possibly the opposition, of those who sit on this side of the House. I may have to encounter equal opposition from the other side. I can assure both sides that my desire is, without favour or undue partiality, to suggest that which I believe to be just, and calculated to terminate that conflict, the continuance of which I think all must regret; to remove the causes of jealousy and dissension between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects; not injuriously to affect any class, and yet to promote the general interests of the community. I consider that it is for the public advantage, at least, to lay the foundation of the final settlement of this question. Sir, I am not about to propose the immediate repeal of the duties which are imposed upon the admission of foreign corn. I am about to propose, as an earnest of the principles on which I shall proceed—I am induced to propose the immediate reduction of duties upon many articles of primary importance which constitute the food of man. And I shall first state those in respect of which I propose there shall be an immediate and total repeal;—with respect to all I propose that the reduction shall be immediate; but I take those first in respect of which I propose an immediate but not total repeal of the duty. I propose that the duties—and I am now speaking of articles of consumption for food—I propose to take an extensive review of all the articles included in the Tariff which enter into the consumption of the people, and I propose to make an immediate reduction in the whole of them. I propose an immediate and total reduction on some articles. I propose, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, that the duties shall be immediately reduced by one-half upon butter, from 1*l.* to 10*s.* the cwt.; upon cheese, from 10*s.* to 5*s.* the cwt.; upon hops, I propose a reduction from 4*l.* 10*s.* to 2*l.* 5*s.* the ton; upon cured fish, I propose to reduce the duty to 1*s.* per cwt. I will now mention the articles of agricultural produce in respect to which I propose an immediate abolition of the duties. I propose an immediate repeal of the duties on all articles which constitute meat; that the duty on fresh beef, on salted beef, on what are called unenumerated articles, salt pork, and fresh pork, on potatoes, on vegetables of all kinds, shall be repealed. From foreign bacon I propose that the duty shall be abolished absolutely and immediately. Upon all such articles I propose that the duties shall be forthwith abolished; that is to say, every thing that enters into the vegetable class, and everything partaking of the animal class, that constitutes food as distinguished from grain, shall be at once admitted free of duty. I believe that in this respect the agriculturists need not fear any competition, nor do I think that they can reasonably complain of such a proposition, inasmuch as they must see that I have dealt with manufactures upon the same principle as I have just proposed to deal with agricultural produce. I have given the farmer increased facilities for meeting foreign

competition by removing the duties upon agricultural seeds, and by admitting into the country such valuable articles as maize and buck-wheat. The increasing skill of the feeder of cattle will, no doubt, be considerably stimulated by that kind of competition which will necessarily arise by these alterations. I believe that these changes will give a considerable advantage to our country over any foreign country. I propose now, having reduced the duty upon what may be considered the manufactured article, to at once remove the duty upon the importation of cattle. In short, I propose in respect to all animals, as a general rule, that they shall be imported henceforth from foreign countries duty free. There is, therefore, I think, no necessity for mentioning the duties I propose to do away in respect to horses and asses, still less in respect to other animals. It is, I think, wholly unnecessary to continue the duties upon animals generally; and no one, I think, will question the policy of removing them altogether, as the maintenance of them has, I consider, operated neither for the policy nor convenience of the country. With respect to all animals I propose, as a proof of our adherence to the principle which we have adopted, and in relation not only to the manufacturing interests, but in respect also to the still more material interests of the country, that all animals shall be admitted duty free. Some persons have, indeed, complained of the manner in which the duties upon foreign cattle are at present levied. It is said, that it is not fair to levy an equal amount of duty upon the animal that is fattened and the lean animal brought from foreign countries. And many persons have expressed an opinion that an advantage would be gained in having free access to the lean animals. At any rate, my proposal will redress this inequality. I must say, I think that the increased means which will necessarily arise by these arrangements for fattening the cattle by the importation of grain, the increased facilities that will be afforded of getting lean cattle, and converting them into fatted animals for the food of the people of this country, will prove of the most important and permanent advantage to all classes. I do hope, therefore, that the manufacturer who may be disposed to find fault with my proposition, in respect to his own immediate interest, will consider this arrangement as affording him some compensation by the reduction of the duty upon fat animals. And those Gentlemen who are, on the other hand, connected with agriculture will, I hope, bear in mind the fact that I have already proposed the removal of protection from some of those great and important articles of manufacture that are closely connected with the land. I do, Sir, trust that they will always bear in mind that I have called upon the manufacturing interest first to set the example of relinquishing those duties. They will bear in mind, I hope, that farm servants and the humbler classes over whom they preside, will be thus enabled to command a greater supply of clothing at a lower rate than they could heretofore procure. By such considerations, I hope that they will not be indisposed to follow the example of those upon whom I have first made the call of relinquishing these protection duties. I will now, Sir, state, with the permission of the House, the proposal which I mean to make upon the subject of the Corn Laws. I have already stated that I have exempted some articles now included under the designation of corn, from the payment of duty altogether—such as maize and buck-wheat. I propose, on the one hand, that these articles shall be permitted to enter duty free from the passing of the Act. On the other hand, I do not propose that there shall be an immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. But, in the hope of preventing any of those evils which might arise from so sudden and important an alteration, and with the view of giving time for the adjustment of those interests connected with agriculture, it is my intention to propose that there shall be a temporary continuance of protection to corn. I propose this arrangement under a distinct understanding that, after the lapse of a certain time, foreign corn shall be permitted to be imported into this country duty free. Sir, I am deeply convinced that any intermediate proposition would be of no avail in effecting a settlement of this question; and, indeed, it would have been out of my power, as I have explained on a former occasion, to suggest any modification of the existing laws relating to corn, without at the same time guaranteeing their ultimate abolition. The choice left to me is either—what some persons so strongly contend for—the maintenance, in fact, of the existing amount of protection in everything, or to take the other course, of laying the foundation for a decided and ultimate settlement of the question by a total repeal of these duties. I propose, therefore, that there shall be at

once a considerable reduction in the existing amount of protection. And I also propose that the continuance of such duties so reduced shall be limited to a period of three years. I propose that this measure shall contain a provision that, at the period of the year when I believe there will be least inconvenience experienced, these duties shall terminate—namely, on the 1st of February, 1849. That at such period oats, barley, and wheat, shall be subject only to the nominal duty of 1*s.* which I have proposed in respect to maize and buck-wheat. The next question to be considered is this—what shall be the intermediate state of the law during the continuance of these duties? My opinion, I am bound to say, as to the policy of providing immediately an alteration in the present law, remains unchanged. I cannot admit that I have taken a very erroneous estimate of the wants of the people under the present circumstances of the kingdom. I deeply regret the existence of such a condition. The pressure upon the people will be somewhat great before the next harvest. I think that we are bound not only to look to the prospects of the next spring, but also to the consequences of that deficiency of food which I am afraid will be experienced. I think it is of great importance to take proper precautions, as far as we can, against the contingency of the people suffering from the effects of the present scarcity. It is possible that the results of this scarcity may be much more extensive than we contemplate. Sir, I wish it were possible to take advantage of this calamity for introducing among the people of Ireland the taste for a better and more certain provision for their support, than that which they have heretofore cultivated; and thereby diminishing the chances to which they will be constantly, I am afraid, liable, of recurrences of this great and mysterious visitation, by making potatoes the ordinary food of millions of our fellow subjects. The deficiency here arises in respect to the food of millions. We have yet to consider what provision is to be made for this deficiency—what substitute we will offer to that suffering portion of our fellow subjects. You may think the potato an insufficient article of subsistence; but you cannot, for a period of two or three years to come, dispense with your reliance upon the potato. You must, therefore, adopt precautions in respect to procuring proper seed for next year. I am not here now to propose that which I proposed in November last—the immediate suspension of the import duties upon corn. That might no doubt be done by an Order in Council; but I think it very important to make such reduction in those duties as shall warrant us in expecting that assistance which is now unfortunately so much required. I wish to have but one law enduring for the limited period to which I refer; but I wish that law to take precautions in part, at least, which suspension would not give. I propose, therefore, that there should be, for the present and immediately, a great reduction in the amount of duty, and that the amount, as I said before, so reduced, should endure only for a limited period, there being a guarantee, by express enactment in the Bill, that on the arrival of that period the then existing duty shall be converted into a mere nominal duty. What then shall be the nature of the law which is to endure for a limited period? My Colleagues and myself have approached this question wholly unprejudiced, and with no other object in view than the general advancement and prosperity of the country. Our desire has been to propose a law, temporary in its enactment, which appears to us, on the whole, best suited to meet the exigencies of the present case, and best calculated to provide for the wants of the country during the period for which it is intended to last. The rate of duty under the existing law, on other descriptions of grain, has been regulated by the rate of duty on wheat. We propose, therefore, that the rates of duty on barley, oats, peas, beans, and rye, shall be governed as nearly as possible, during the continuance of this law, if it meet with the sanction of Parliament, by the principles which will apply to wheat; that is, that there shall be a reduction of a corresponding amount applied to all. But I propose that immediately from the passing of this Act, all grain, the produce of British colonial possessions, out of bond, shall be admitted at a nominal duty. I propose that, in all cases, those restrictions which apply to the import of meal from the Colonies, the produce of grain, shall be removed. I presume they were established for the protection of the milling interest of the country. I believe them to be wholly unnecessary. They are not applied to meal the produce of wheat; I cannot see any reason why they should be retained for barley or any other description of grain. Now, on the one hand, then, I offer to those who insist upon the immediate unqualified removal of these

laws—I offer the unrestricted importation, at least the importation at a nominal duty, of all kinds of grain, and all kinds of meal the produce of grain from the British colonial possessions out of Europe at a nominal duty. There is one great article, the produce of the United States, an article to the free export of which the United States attach the utmost importance—viz., that of maize. I propose that that should be admitted duty free. This is the provision with respect to other descriptions of grain which we propose shall endure throughout the period that foreign grain is to be subject to duty. We attempted to meet some of the objections which have been made to the varying price of wheat; at the same time to fix any duty which would be considered available would not answer the purpose which I am desirous to attain, of making an immediate reduction, on account of temporary exigencies, in the present amount of price. We propose, therefore, that in lieu of the duties now payable on the importation of corn, grain, meal, or flour, there shall be paid until the 1st day of February, 1849, the following duties, viz. :—

If imported from any foreign country—

WHEAT.

Whenever the average price of Wheat, made up and published in the manner required by law, shall be for every quarter

Under 48*s.*	the duty shall be for every quarter	10*s.*	0*d.*
48*s.* . 49*s.*	ditto.	9	0
49*s.* . 50*s.*	ditto.	8	0
50*s.* . 51*s.*	ditto.	7	0
51*s.* . 52*s.*	ditto.	6	0
52*s.* . 53*s.*	ditto.	5	0
53*s.* and upwards	ditto.	4	0

I propose, that whenever the price of grain made up and published in the manner required by law shall exceed 53*s.*, there shall then be an invariable duty of 4*s.* per quarter. That is to say, that there shall be no temptation to hold grain when the price shall exceed 54*s.*, for the purpose of securing the shilling of extra duty. The enactments which we shall propose with respect to all other descriptions of grain will precisely follow the scale which we have adopted with regard to wheat. It would, however, perhaps be more convenient for the House, considering the time I have already occupied, that I should rather refer them to the details which will be printed to-morrow morning, than go through the whole now as regards oats and barley. It may be sufficient for the present purpose to state that the same general rule will be adopted in all. There would now, therefore, be levied on wheat, instead of a duty of 16*s.*, one of 4*s.* ; and every other grain at the present prices taken out of bond for consumption in the home market, would be subject to a merely nominal duty. That is the arrangement for the adjustment of this great question, which Her Majesty's Government are induced to offer for the consideration of Parliament. We propose to accompany that arrangement with other provisions, calculated, I will not say to give compensation, but calculated, in my firm belief, materially to advance the interests of that portion of the community which, after the lapse of three years, will be called upon to relinquish protection. I believe it to be possible to suggest arrangements, not affecting the interests of other parts of the community, but materially benefiting the agricultural interests, and to introduce reforms in the levy of duties and the application of burdens which will be of material advantage. I thank the House for having permitted me, without interruption, to state all those portions of the law which might appear to bear too heavily. I am obliged to them for the forbearance with which they have permitted me to go through that part of this great question. I will now state what are the measures with which we propose to accompany this great present reduction and ultimate extinction of protection—measures which I believe will be greatly for the advantage of the interest in whose welfare this country is deeply interested. Let us review some of the burdens which do fall immediately upon the land—the burdens which are, in my opinion, some of them, at least, capable of alleviation, not by their transfer to other parties, but by introducing reform in the administration of the expenditure. First, let me take the existing arrangement with respect to one great source of expenditure—to one great burden which is constantly and justly complained of by the agriculturist; I mean the amount of rate which is levied for the highways. Is it not possible, without subjecting other parties to the expense of the rate—is it not possible to introduce useful reforms into the administration of the expenditure, which shall be a relief to the landed interest? I believe it to be possible. What is the law and practice now with respect to the highways of this country? There are 16,000 different local authorities, each of which has the charge of the highways. These highways are be-

coming of increased importance as railways advance. In some cases the turnpike road is becoming of diminished importance, and the highway, for which each parish is subject, is becoming of increased importance; but what can be more defective than that, where the highway is a continuous channel of communication, passing between different parishes, the same highway shall be under the control of every different parish, and the total number of parish authorities is not less than 16,000? What is the advantage? There is the nominal advantage of the appointment of a surveyor in each parish, who absolutely knows nothing about the construction of highways. That each portion of the highway should be subject to a different parochial authority seems to us as most evidently opening a road to great abuses, to a lax expenditure, and to a bad system of repairing the roads. Sir, there is one Act of Parliament which permits the voluntary union of parishes into a district authority, for the supervision of the roads. But as it is only voluntary, as it is merely a permissory Act, and as there are so many local interests affected by entering into the voluntary arrangement, the result is that hardly in any instance is the arrangement made. What I propose—and I do it for the benefit of the agricultural interest, not merely as a relief from a burden, but as a means of greatly improving their means of communication—what I propose is, to make that which is now voluntary compulsory. I propose to compel the union of parishes into districts for all the purposes of the roads. The size of the districts is a matter of detail for further consideration; but we think that districts may be so formed as that we may have 600 local authorities, having cognizance of the roads, in place of 16,000, as we have at present. When, however, the local authorities shall have been constituted, we will permit them, or rather require them, to appoint a surveyor, a competent professional man, who shall have the charge of the whole of the highways of the district to which he has been appointed. There are some instances in which a voluntary union of parishes has been entered into, and some do now exist. I should wish to state to the House what has been the result in one of them of the substitution of a central authority in place of many parochial authorities. In a district of the north the parochial authorities, by their own consent, were superseded, they having 70 miles under their superintendence; and this was the result, as stated to me in a report I hold in my hand:—

"The effect of the change has been remarkable. Formerly, the expenditure under the local parochial authorities, was from 6*d.* to 9*d.* per pound rental, and the money was literally thrown away. Now, the case has been completely altered. The roads in the whole of our districts, are as good as any in England; the management is good, and all is performed to the perfect satisfaction of the ratepayers, while the expense does not range higher than from 1½*d.* to 3*d.* in the pound of rental; while in the nine adjoining townships, in which the roads are not so good, it is from 4½*d.* to 5*d.*"

Well, Sir, that is not a mere transferring of the burden; it is an advantageous arrangement which, by the aid of the Legislature, will relieve the agriculturists from a burden which presses heavily upon them without transferring it to any other. That, Sir, is one of the advantageous arrangements which Her Majesty's Ministers propose to make, and which we believe will prove a relief to agriculture. I come now, Sir, to a law grievously complained of, and justly grievously complained of, by the agricultural interest. I mean the present law of settlement. Under the present law of settlement, the population of a rural district, in times of manufacturing prosperity, is invited to emigrate to some great manufacturing town. The prime of a man's life is consumed in those manufacturing districts—all the advantages to be derived from his strength, his good conduct, and his industry, are derived by the master manufacturers in the towns. A revolution in manufacturing affairs takes place, a reaction ensues, and the trading and manufacturing interests do not prosper—then what takes place? The man, together with his family, who were removed from the agricultural districts in a season of manufacturing prosperity, are sent back to the agricultural districts; and that man, the best of whose life and energy has been spent in the manufacturing district, that man who perhaps had not been provident in his prosperity, must return to the rural district unfitted for rural occupations; that man, greatly to his annoyance and suffering, is transferred to a former home which probably he has forgotten—to a place with which he has lost all connexions, and where he has not the means of getting employment—and not only is a great injustice inflicted upon the rural district, but a shock is given to the feelings of every just and humane man. We propose, therefore, not only to relieve the land from a burden, but we propose to do an act of justice to the labouring man by altering the law of

settlement. We propose, Sir, that an industrial residence of five years shall not only give a claim to relief, but that after such a residence the power of removing him shall be taken away; and that his legal claim for support shall not be on the place of his original settlement, but on the place to which for five years his labour and industry were given. Now, Sir, I dare say many will remember what took place in 1842. In 1842 there was great distress in the manufacturing districts; the practice then followed was, that the person employed in manufactures who had a settlement in the agricultural districts, should be returned to those districts for the purpose of obtaining relief. Now, Sir, I conceive that the alteration we propose will be a moral improvement of the law, just in itself, and a great relief to the rural districts. It will be a great advantage to the agricultural interest, while, at the same time, it will be the remedy of a gross injustice under which the labouring man now exists. On the part of Her Majesty's Government, then, I propose that from and after the passing of this law, no person who shall have resided five years in a parish shall be removed from that parish; and that residence in a prison, barrack, lunatic asylum, or hospital, or any residence in a poor-house, during which the person shall have been in the receipt of relief, shall form part of such five years, and be no interruption to the period. I propose, not only that there shall be no power of removal to the land, but that the children of any person, or the children of his wife, whether legitimate or illegitimate, under 16 years, residing with the father or mother, shall not be removed, nor shall the wife of any person be removed where such person is himself not removable. We propose, therefore, that the children and the wife shall not be separated in such case from the husband, and that he who has an industrial residence of the term of five years shall have the right to relief for himself and his family, not from the place of his rural settlement, but from the place of his last industrial residence. At present, immediately upon the death of a labouring man in a manufacturing district, the widow can be removed to her settlement. We shall propose that, after the passing of this law, no widow who shall be residing with her husband at the time of his death, shall be removed within the ensuing twelve months. There is one point more. At present, when the working man is exhausted by the labours of a lifetime, an apprehension often arises in the minds of the parish authorities that he will become chargeable to the parish, and they immediately set about his removal. Now, we propose that there shall be no power of removal on the ground of chargeability, on account of accident, or by sickness of a man or any of his family, from the manufacturing to the agricultural districts. Here again, by the alteration of the law which we propose I think that we shall be gaining a great social advantage, and also relieving the agricultural districts from a burden which is certainly very great. We propose to grant this relief, while at the same time we are taking means of preventing injustice being done to the man whose five years' labour has tended to enrich the district made liable for his maintenance. I approach now another matter on which we are prepared to advise an alteration, and one which I think can be carried into effect without loss to agriculture. In fact, I anticipate not only that the alteration will be an advantage to agriculture, but a benefit to all parts of the country. There is a dread—a natural dread—of competition on the part of agriculturists. It is impossible, I think, for any man to deny that agricultural science is yet in its infancy in this country. But there are means of meeting this competition which is so much dreaded, by the application of capital, skill, and industry; and by the adoption of those means I feel persuaded that both the agriculturists and the labouring man will be enabled to meet the competition they will have to encounter; and, in order to facilitate this effect, we propose that the State shall encourage agricultural industry. Let any one read the evidence taken before a Committee of the other House, which sat last Session, and of which the Duke of Richmond was chairman, with respect to improvements on entailed estates. That evidence shows that in immense districts the means of improvement are greatly neglected. Among other means, I believe draining might be employed so as greatly to increase the produce of the land. There are many difficulties in the way—these are shown in the Report of the Committee to which I have alluded. Various schemes have been proposed to overcome them, some of which originated with my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire; but, in addition to other sources of difficulty in making these improvements, there have arisen great

difficulties in consequence of the necessity of the intervention of the Court of Chancery in cases of trust estates. Now, with respect to cases of these descriptions, we shall recommend that the public should, for the purpose of facilitating these improvements, advance sums of money to parties applying for assistance, not, however, subjecting the public to any ultimate loss; but advancing sums of money for the purposes of improvement, upon sufficient security. Now, I attach great importance to the principle that no loss shall fall upon the public. Besides the general effect of facilitating improvements in agriculture, by these means improvements throughout the country will be stimulated to an extent which would not easily be capable of being overrated. I propose that the Exchequer Bill Commissioners should have the power to lend a given amount of money upon tangible security; and I should recommend that, to arrive at a conclusion as to the parties to whom money may safely be lent, you take advantage of a board lately instituted—I mean the Board of Commissioners of Enclosures. I should propose that those proprietors of land who may contemplate improvements on their properties should make application to the Enclosure Commissioners to the effect, that they contemplate the improvement of their land by drainage. We have arranged that the preliminary survey shall be made at the expense of the individual who applies for pecuniary assistance in the manner proposed. We have, I say, arranged that the original expense be borne by the party applying for relief. We propose then, that after an inquiry has been made, after an investigation has been held by the Enclosure Commissioners, that upon a certificate being issued by the Commissioners of Enclosures it should be a warrant to the Exchequer-bill Loan Commissioners to advance a certain sum, provision being made for the repayment of that sum at a moderate rate of interest, and, at the same time, of a repayment on small instalments annually of the principal. These provisions are to be guarantees to the public of the repayment of both principal and interest. And we also propose that this advance be considered as a prior charge on the land—that it have priority on all other charges on the land, excepting in the case where any party who has a charge upon the land should think fit to make objection to such application being granted. I believe, however, that the cases would be rare where such objections would occur; because parties could not but feel that such an application for the improvement of the land would be a new guarantee for the security of their claims. Still we feel that when these advances are applied for, the power of interposing ought to be given to those having a preceding claim on the land; that they should have power to make an objection to that which would constitute a prior claim to their own. We propose, therefore, that parties having an estate in tail or a prior charge upon the land should have power to object to that which will constitute a charge on the land prior to their own, and that in that case the loan should not be had without the consent of the Court of Chancery. We believe that by an arrangement of this sort we shall be able to obviate obstructions that arise in case of entailed estates, wherein enormous expenses are incurred in appeals to the Court of Chancery, and a multitude of impediments are found to arise to parties seeking advances and loans of money from private companies. And we believe that this will be found to be the foundation for great agricultural improvements. I confess I do not limit the contemplated amount of improvements that will be made to the mere cases on which these actual advances may take place. I believe they will be found to promote greatly the spirit of improvement; that when a man sees his neighbour having the cultivation of his land carried on under scientific direction — that when he sees him thus effecting great improvement in his estate, and this through the intervention of a loan or advance made to him on the part of the Government, that this will tend greatly to lead to a spirit of agricultural improvement. This then is another mode by which we propose to enable the landed interest to meet the competition with which they are threatened by the law that I am about to propose. And now, with respect to direct local burdens. Her Majesty's Government have given their serious consideration to that subject, and on their part I must say that I cannot advise any material alteration of the system under which the assessments now take place. There is no doubt that there are immense sums of money now levied on land under the name of poor rates, which go to meet other charges than those for the relief and sustenance of the poor. Another objection is made, when it is said, and said with apparent justice, that these

are charges on the land, and that therefore there ought to be some great alteration of the manner in which these levies are made. In point of fact, the charges are not charges upon the land. So far as this charge is concerned, the opposition is not between land and houses; the opposition is merely between real and personal property, because it is not land alone that is subjected to the burden, but it is real property; including houses, and including mines, and quarries, and manufactories, which are subject to the payment of the assessments under this head. If, indeed, the Government were to take the rate upon themselves, and levy it as a tax uniformly, it might perhaps be justice, and might be an advantage to make personal property pay. But recollect that this is a local charge and not a general charge; that the land would gain nothing if the property in Manchester, for instance, contributed to the relief of the poor in a manner different from what it does at present; that there would be no advantage to any part of Yorkshire, if the principal towns in England bore a different assessment, such as Halifax, Huddersfield. and Stockport, or any other town. It would be merely a different distribution of the burden within that locality. You may subject personal property to this charge; but if you do, you must make personal property so subject to it, not only in the towns, but in the rural districts. But how are you to levy such a charge for a small local burden? You cannot do so, as you do it with a great public contribution for a public purpose, like the income tax. You cannot, I say, do so; for when you come to levy minute sums for the relief of the poor, depend upon it that you will find, in the rural districts, that it is a kind of imposition which will not be borne; and so far from being a benefit to the land, to raise minute sums by means of an inquisition into a man's private circumstances, carried on and raised by the local authorities, would be a burden that would be felt to be intolerable. I willingly admit that there may be found persons possessing great property in large rural districts, and also in large manufacturing towns, and that personal property ought to be made to contribute where individuals are so situated —that assessments should be so made as to make these contribute to local charges, and that by so doing the burden would be more equitably distributed. This may be so; but I am not prepared to suggest a remedy by which I think this injustice can be remedied. I do not think it can be attempted; and considering that the charge is local; that if you wish personal property to contribute, there must be an inquisition into private affairs; and that if you choose to do this—then there must be not only an inquiry into the profits of the trader, but there must also be an inquiry into the profits of the farmer. You certainly had at one time a charge upon personal property in the counties—you had that, but what did it produce? You were obliged to abandon the charge upon personal property; for you found it impossible to collect it. I conceive, then, that it would be no advantage to the agricultural interest now to propose any such charge. I am sure that for the State to take upon itself the maintenance of the poor—I am sure that any such plan would be open to the gravest objection; that to alter that charge—to attempt to make it general instead—would be a change that, in my firm conviction, could not benefit the land. I am not prepared, therefore, to propose any material amendments of the law, or the principle on which the rates are levied; but though I cannot propose any alteration in this respect, I think that there is a fair claim on the part of the land for direct relief from some portions of the local burdens to which they are now subjected—that there should be taken off some of those burdens on the land. I cannot maintain this proposition as a direct compensation to the land; but when we are laying the foundation for a great social improvement, I say that we may take and place upon the public some of the charges that are now thrown upon the land. Some of these charges were brought under the notice of the House last year by the hon. Member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles). I was obliged, then, in opposing his proposition, to object that as long as the land was benefited by protection, I advised the agricultural interest not to claim relief from these charges—that the relief sought for was in itself comparatively small. But now, when it is determined to expose that interest to competition, then we have a right to look to these charges; and, when you have the power to do so, to relieve it to a certain extent; and in doing so, we have, at the same time, the power of conferring a great benefit upon the community, and for laying the foundation for a great improvement in the administration of the law. You have already taken off one-half the

expense of maintaining prisoners in Great Britain and Ireland, who are under sentence for felony or misdemeanour; and I propose to relieve the counties of this charge altogether, and take from the Consolidated Fund the expense of the maintenance of such prisoners. I propose, in order that there should be a constant and vigilant check, that this and other similar charges shall be provided for by an annual vote. We estimate the sum of which these will relieve the counties at 64,000*l.* per annum. And now, in respect to the expense of prosecutions in England, one-half of that charge is already paid by the public Treasury. In Scotland, the charge is borne altogether by the Treasury, whilst in Ireland there still remains a portion of the charge which is borne by the land. We propose in the case of England, and in the case of Ireland, that that portion of the charge of the expense of prosecutions which is now borne by local rates, shall be borne altogether by the public Treasury. It is true, the relief is not great; but I think the change is of importance, as it undoubtedly affords increased means of establishing some control over prosecutions; and you will be amply repaid, in a social point of view, by acquiring that increased control over any sum you may grant. In Scotland, you have an admirable system of checking prosecutions by means of a public prosecutor. In Ireland, you apply a principle of the same kind, by requiring that, in respect of all prosecutions borne by the public, there shall be the assent of a public officer of the Crown. Now, for the purpose of relief, and for the purpose of combining with relief the means of introducing an improvement of your criminal law, I propose that the whole of the remainder of that charge shall be taken from the land, and be borne by the country. The amount will be, in Ireland, about 17,000*l.*, and in England about 100,000*l.* a year. Now, in the case of Ireland, if there be any part of the United Kingdom which is to suffer by the withdrawal of protection, I have always felt that that part of the United Kingdom is Ireland. Its capital and enterprise are almost exclusively directed to agriculture. And if, in the intended measures, with regard to the burdens on land, there should appear, at first sight, to be any undue favour shown towards Ireland, let us bear in mind that Ireland has not the means which other parts of the United Kingdom have of employing labour in manufacturing pursuits. But again, I propose no relief from burdens which are not accompanied with some great social advantages. At present you have a great police force in Ireland. The expense of a portion of that force is borne by the land in Ireland; the expense of the remainder is borne by the public Treasury; and it certainly is a most anomalous system for one portion to be borne by the public Treasury, and the other portion by the land. I believe that it will be an immense advantage to place the police force directly under the control of the Executive—to prevent the possibility of all interference by local bodies; to make it as perfect a system as you can, excluding all power of local nomination or local interference, taking the whole control on the Executive Government; and, in order that you may make that control complete, paying the expense out of the public Treasury. This was strongly recommended last year by that Commission over which the Earl of Devon presided, without any reference whatever to the law of protection; and Her Majesty's Government are disposed to recommend to the House that the whole charge for that rural police in Ireland shall be borne by the public Treasury. There is another charge borne by the land in this country, of which again, for local purposes, we propose that a share shall be borne by the Treasury. I allude to the medical relief in parishes. There is no part of the administration of the Poor Law which I think has given more dissatisfaction than the administration of medical relief. There seems to have been great unwillingness on the part of the guardians of the poor to afford relief, under the impression that their immediate concern was with the relief of absolute distress, and giving sustenance to those who were in danger of starvation. I am sorry to say that there have been frequently just grounds of complaint in respect to the administration of medical relief. The state of medical relief in Scotland occupied the attention of the House in the course of the last Session. And, for the purpose of meeting the views of those who object to the present system, and for the purpose of giving the Executive Government a greater degree of control over it, and gradually introducing an amended system, we propose to take one-half of the charge of the payment of medical officers upon the Treasury. Thus we shall be enabled to meet the objection of those who demur to the exercise of Government control and to the expense, by offering, on the part of the public, to contribute one-half. In that case I estimate that the amount of charge will be 100,000*l.* in England, and

15,000*l.* in Scotland. Ireland is under a separate law with respect to medical relief. I believe the whole subject requires reconsideration, and that it is likely to occupy the attention of both Houses of Parliament in the present Session. With regard to Scotland, there is a separate charge, which I think is for the prison of Perth. The amount is very small, but the "principle" is what they object to. The charge of the prison at Pentonville is borne by the public Treasury, and Scotland, therefore, objects to bear the expense of the prison at Perth. Now it will be a satisfaction to this feeling, even if it be no great relief, if we apply the same rule which is applied to Pentonville and Parkhurst prisons, and other prisons not immediately used for local purposes, and relieve Scotland from this charge by taking it from the public Treasury. There is only one other item of expense which I propose to place on the public; and I think that in that I shall have the general acquiescence of the House. I believe that in every parish workhouse there is great ground for complaint, at least in many of them, of inadequate provision for purposes of education. In many workhouses there are no schools—in many others some person perfectly unfit to be intrusted with the education of youth is appointed as master or mistress, at a salary perhaps of 10*l.* Now, we propose in no way whatever to interfere with the right of appointment. We wish to avoid the possibility of raising any religious question. The right of appointment of a schoolmaster or schoolmistress shall remain with the guardians of the poor. But we are ready to take the expense of providing proper schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. We require qualification. We require the right of dismissal and the right of inspection; but we are ready at the public charge to provide a competent and decent salary for those who are to have the charge of the education of the poor. We propose that a grant of about 30,000*l.* a year shall be made for the purpose of providing competent salaries for schoolmasters and schoolmistresses for the children of the destitute in each Union, taking at least so much of control (without interfering with religion in any degree beyond what at present appears to be the case under the existing law) as to require that the party shall be competent—that there shall be some examination as to qualification, and some inspection of and control over the management of the school. Then again, with respect to the auditors of Unions, we propose that the charge for the salary of auditors shall be borne in like manner by the public Treasury, which will require about 15,000*l.* Now observe, that, in almost every case in which I propose any remission of the burden which falls on the land, I propose also the attainment of some great object connected with the public advantage. If this general scheme which I now propose shall meet with the approbation of the House, observe what it does for the great body of the people. At a very early period many of the restrictions which apply to the importation of food will be at once repealed. Instantly, in respect to clothing, there will be perfect liberty to purchase clothing in the cheapest market. With respect to medical attendance, we propose an arrangement which, I believe, will greatly improve the administration of the Poor Law. Before these propositions be rejected, therefore, I hope that both parties will well consider—even if their immediate views cannot be accomplished—yet, that both parties will well consider that instantly, with respect to many articles of food, there will be free importation. In respect to all there will be a perfectly free importation at an early period. In respect to all the main articles of clothing there will be free importation, with liberty to purchase wherever clothing can be obtained. And with respect to medical assistance, there will be considerable improvement on the existing practice. Well, these several propositions appear to me to be calculated to confer great benefits upon the country at large. Whether or no they are sufficient to induce both parties, those who entertain different views, to support them, I cannot undertake to say. I wish, however, that the whole should be fairly considered; that on each side you will well reflect upon the consequences of the immediate rejection of this scheme. I ask for the expression of no opinion at this moment; but I do hope that after an interval of some days we shall approach it with that entire consideration which shall lead to a fruitful result, and in the same temper of mind with which, on both sides, you have listened to my observations to-night. Now, let me conclude with two observations: one connected with our foreign policy and the interests of our commercial intercourse with foreign countries; and the other having reference to our own domestic circumstances. I fairly avow to you that in making this great reduction upon the import of articles, the produce and manufacture of foreign countries, I have no guarantee to give you that other

countries will immediately follow our example. I give you that advantage in the argument. Wearied with our long and unavailing efforts to enter into satisfactory commercial treaties with other nations, we have resolved at length to consult our own interests, and not to punish those other countries for the wrong they do us in continuing their high duties upon the importation of our products and manufactures, by continuing high duties ourselves, encouraging unlawful trade. We have had no communication with any Foreign Government upon the subject of these reductions. We cannot promise that France will immediately make a corresponding reduction in her tariff. I cannot promise that Russia will prove her gratitude to us for our reduction of duty on her tallow, by any diminution of her duties. You may, therefore, say, in opposition to the present plan, what is this superfluous liberality, that you are going to do away with all these duties, and yet you expect nothing in return? I may, perhaps, be told, that many foreign countries, since the former relaxation of duties on our part—and that would be perfectly consistent with the fact—foreign countries which have benefited by our relaxations, have not followed our example; nay, have not only not followed our example, but have actually applied to the importation of British goods higher rates of duties than formerly. I quite admit it. I give you all the benefit of that argument. I rely upon that fact, as conclusive proof of the policy of the course we are pursuing. It is a fact, that other countries have not followed our example, and have levied higher duties in some cases upon our goods. But what has been the result upon the amount of your exports? You have defied the regulations of these countries. Your export trade is greatly increased. Now, why is that so? Partly because of your acting without wishing to avail yourselves of their assistance; partly, because of the smuggler, not engaged by you, in so many continental countries, whom the strict regulations and the triple duties, which are to prevent any ingress of foreign goods, have raised up; and partly, perhaps, because these very precautions against the ingress of your commodities are a burden, and the taxation increasing the cost of production disqualify the foreigner from competing with you. But your exports, whatever be the tariffs of other countries, or however apparent the ingratitude with which they have treated you—your export trade has been constantly increasing. By the remission of your duties upon the raw material—by inciting your skill and industry—by competition with foreign goods, you have defied your competitors in foreign markets, and you have even been enabled to exclude them. Notwithstanding their hostile tariffs, the declared value of British exports has increased above 10,000,000*l.* during the period which has elapsed since the relaxation of the duties on your part. I say, therefore, to you, that these hostile tariffs, so far from being an objection to continuing your policy, are an argument in its favour. But, depend upon it, your example will ultimately prevail. When your example could be quoted in favour of restriction, it was quoted largely; when your example can be quoted in favour of relaxation, as conducive to your interests, it may perhaps excite at first, in Foreign Governments, or foreign Boards of Trade, but little interest or feeling; but the sense of the people—of the great body of consumers—will prevail; and, in spite of the desire of Governments and Boards of Trade to raise revenue by restrictive duties, reason and common sense will induce relaxation of high duties. That is my firm belief. I see symptoms of it already. Our last accounts from the United States give indications of the decline of a hostile spirit in this respect. Look to the report made by the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. It shows to you that your example is not unavailing. In the report made by the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Walker, a report containing very enlightened views on the subject of commerce, that gentleman thus speaks of restrictions upon trade and import duties:—

"By countervailing the protective system," says that gentleman, in the report to which I refer, "we injure our own cause, and we sacrifice our own agricultural and commercial classes. As well might we attempt to engraft a monarchy and an aristocracy upon our Constitution, as to enforce a protective system in the United States. Let, therefore, our commerce be as free as our institutions. Let us proclaim our commerce free, and nation after nation will follow our example. If I were asked who began this system, I should answer at once, England began it by her repeal of the duty on our raw cottons, and the reduction of the duties on our bread stuffs; and although we cannot now take the lead in this enlightened policy, we may, at least, be amongst the first to perceive its advantage, and to follow it."

Here is an admission of the correctness of the course you have adopted in making reductions without stipulating or making any preliminary negotiations. You have reduced the duty upon cotton, and now the United States admit the time is come

when they must follow your example. In other parts of Europe, where the form of Government is totally distinct from ours, I can give you proof that your example is producing effect. I could give you the instance of a country as opposed with respect to the institutions of government as any country could be to the United States. In Naples, for instance, liberal views are beginning to prevail. I must say, in justice to the Sovereign who now rules over that country, and who himself takes a personal part with respect to these commercial questions—I have seen a document written by him containing as free principles with respect to commercial intercourse as could come from any professor of political economy—and that he is constantly urging the relaxation of the duties which now apply to foreign imports; and I do not despair that, at a very early period, foreign nations will receive tariffs more favourable to our interests. In Norway, exertions to obtain a relaxation of duties are increasing. In Sweden, and many other countries, there is a disposition to follow the same course. Austria, too, shows some disposition, at least, not to follow other countries in their restrictive policy. Hanover, also, has taken her own course; and I do not despair of the early arrival of the period when your example shall tell upon the conduct of other countries, and when they shall quote our example of relaxation as a course for their Governments in commercial affairs. I trust that this improved intercourse with foreign countries will constitute a new bond of peace: and that it will control the passions of those European Governments who still indulge themselves in the visions of war. I do hope that the friends and lovers of peace between nations will derive material strength from the example which I have advised, by remitting the impediments to commercial intercourse. But observe, if that be the effect, I think in all probability that the continuance of permanent peace will expose us to more extensive and more formidable competition with foreign countries with respect to manufactures. During war we commanded the supply of nations. Peace has introduced not only new consumers, but also formidable manufacturing interests. In order that we may retain our pre-eminence it is of the greatest importance that we neglect no opportunity of securing to ourselves those advantages by which that pre-eminence can be alone secured. Sir, I firmly believe that abundance and cheapness of provisions is one of the constituents by which the continuance of manufacturing and commercial pre-eminence may be maintained. You may say the object of these observations is to flatter the love of gain, and administer merely to the desire of accumulating money. I advise this measure on no such ground. I believe that the accumulation of wealth, that is, the increase of capital, is a main element, or at least one of the chief means by which we can retain the eminence we have so long possessed. But, I have attempted to show that abundance of provisions, and security (which is the main thing) for continued abundance, not only contributes to the accumulation of wealth, but that it is directly conducive to the alleviation of public burdens, by increasing the revenue; to the alleviation of local burdens by diminishing crimes; but, above all, that it is conducive to the spread of morality, by diminishing those temptations to crime which arise from distress and poverty. I ask you, therefore, to give your consent to this measure, not upon any narrow view that its principle is connected with the accumulation of wealth—I ask you to give your consent to this measure on far higher principles; on the principle that, incumbered as we are by heavy taxes, that, solicitous as we are to provide for the public credit, we feel the true source of increased revenue to be increased comfort, an increased taste for luxury, and that unseen and voluntary taxation which arises from increased consumption. I ask you to consent to this upon proof advanced to you, that abundance and cheapness lead to diminished crime and increased morality. I could adduce to you many instances of the beneficial effects of this comparative cheapness. It is said there is no danger of scarcity, and why then should we interfere? Now, what is scarcity? It is a relative term. That which is not scarcity to us may be scarcity to others. But remember this, the lapse of three years of abundance is an important era in the history of a country. Three years of abundance and comparative cheapness of provisions, have materially altered the circumstances and feelings of the people. That which was not scarcity in the hard winter of 1842, would be scarcity now. That which was not then a denial of comforts, though they might almost amount to necessaries, would be felt severely now. There would be much more real suffering felt in 1846, after the enjoyment of three years of comparative abundance, by being now put upon a short allowance, than there would have

been in 1842. Then, I advise you not to check the genial growth of that prosperity we have now enjoyed for three years. Do not mistake me. I am not insensible that that prosperity has arisen from the favour of Providence towards us. I do not say that without importing grain from foreign countries you could not have a sufficient supply; but I entreat you well to consider whether or no that should constitute a reason why, if there should be danger of an insufficient supply at home, we should not remedy the evil as well as we can by admitting imports from abroad. I was much struck the other day by an illustration afforded on this subject. I was told that in one battalion of the Guards, in this town, there had been a great increase in the application for furloughs by the private soldiers, within the last three years; and that the furloughs granted in 1845 were nearly double the usual number. Upon inquiring the reason, I was told that the friends of these soldiers were in so much more comfortable circumstances than formerly, that the soldiers were continually invited to pass some time in the country with their relations, and that they availed themselves of these invitations. Now, this may be comparatively a trivial circumstance, but it seemed to me a striking instance of the moral advantage of a period of abundance in facilitating the intercourse of kindly feelings, and permitting those who are divided, and could not do so in periods of difficulty and distress, to revisit their homes, and return, probably, with feelings better qualifying them for the performance of their duties. I was asked the other night why I was disposed to disturb that state of prosperity which I have said exists? "If," it is said, "there has been during the last three years comparative abundance and prosperity, which have coexisted with the Corn Law of 1842, where is the necessity of disturbing that arrangement?" My answer is, that up to the month of October last all these indications of prosperity did exist; but in that month, and three or four months subsequently, there has been a considerable change. I find a passage in one of the trade circulars from Manchester which explains this state of things, and which I will read to the House. It is dated the 22d of January, 1846. It says—

"The anticipations which we ventured to make in our last annual circular, as to the prospects of the year we had then just entered upon, were fully realized for the first nine months, during which we enjoyed not only a continuance of the prosperity of 1844, but had reached to a degree unexampled in our manufacturing history—extending to every branch, and acting powerfully on the social condition of our teeming population. The causes which combined to produce this state of things were, as in the former year, steadiness of prices, with a demand constantly keeping pace with the supply; low rates for the raw material, abundance of money at a moderate rate of interest, with a discriminating and careful management of our banking institutions; regular and full employment for all classes of our operatives, with cheap and abundant food, and the absence of any political event threatening either our domestic peace or foreign relations; to which may be added, the wise and comprehensive fiscal measures of the last Session of Parliament. Unhappily, we have lately experienced a reverse in several of these elements of prosperity, which, acting on each other, led to a state of embarrassment under which we laboured for the last three months of the year, and are still labouring, though in a mitigated form.

"Our home trade demand, up to the end of September, was on an unprecedentedly large scale; but, from the causes above-mentioned, an almost total suspension took place for the two succeeding months, which have been followed since by a moderate business only."

We are not, therefore, to conclude that these indications of prosperity continued. I admit that this change since the month of October is one of the grounds on which I have adopted the conclusion to which I have come. These, Mr. Greene, are the proposals which, on the part of the Government, I offer for the adjustment—the ultimate adjustment of this question. I cannot appeal to any ungenerous feeling—I cannot appeal to fear, or to anything which will be calculated to exercise an undue sway over the reason of those to whom these proposals are made. There may be agitation, but it is not one which has reached the great mass of the labouring classes, there being among them a total absence of all excitement. I admit it is perfectly possible that, without danger to the public peace, we might continue the existing duties; therefore I cannot appeal to fear as a ground for agreeing to these proposals. But this I do say—there has been a great change in the opinion of the great mass of the community with respect to the Corn Laws. There is between the master manufacturers and the operative classes a common conviction that did not prevail in 1842 or at a former period—that it will be for the public advantage that these laws should be repealed; and while there is that union of sentiment between them, there appears at the same time to be a general contentment and loyalty, and a confidence in your justice and impartiality. As far as I can judge, the example which you set in taking on

yourselves great pecuniary burdens, in order that you might relieve the labouring classes from the taxation they are subject to, has produced the deepest impression and the most beneficial effect on their minds; and they have a perfect confidence, as I said before, in your justice and wisdom. But because this is a time of peace; because there is a perfect calm, except so far as an agitation among the principal manufacturers may interrupt it; because you are not subject to any coercion whatever, I entreat you to bear in mind that the aspect of affairs may change; that we may have to contend with worse harvests than that of this year; and that it may be wise to avail ourselves of the present moment to effect an adjustment which I believe must be ultimately made, and which could not be long delayed without engendering feelings of animosity between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects. From a sincere conviction that the settlement is not to be delayed—that, accompanied with the precautionary measures to which I have referred, it will not inflict injury on the agricultural interest—from those feelings I should deeply lament, exclusively on public grounds, the failure of the attempt which, at the instance of Her Majesty's Government, I have made on this occasion to recommend to your calm and dispassionate consideration these proposals, with no other feeling or interest in the ultimate issue than that they may, to use the words of Her Majesty's Speech, conduce to the promotion "of friendly feelings between different classes, to provide additional security for the continuance of peace, and to maintain contentment and happiness at home by increasing the comforts and bettering the condition of the great body of the people." The right hon. Baronet concluded by moving the following Resolution:—

Resolved—That in lieu of the Duties now payable on the importation of Corn, Grain, Meal, or Flour, there shall be paid until the 1st day of February, 1849, the following Duties, viz.

If imported from any Foreign Country;

WHEAT:—

Whenever the average price of Wheat, made up and published in the manner required by Law, shall be, for every quarter—

	s.	d.
Under 48*s.* the Duty shall be, for every quarter	10	0
48*s.* and under 49*s.*	9	0
49*s.* and under 50*s.*	8	0
50*s.* and under 51*s.*	7	0
51*s.* and under 52*s.*	6	0
52*s.* and under 53*s.*	5	0
53*s.* and upwards	4	0

BARLEY, BEER, OR BIGG;—

Whenever the average price of Barley, made up and published in the manner required by Law, shall be, for every quarter—

Under 26*s.* the Duty shall be, for every quarter	5	0
26*s.* and under 27*s.*	4	6
27*s.* and under 28*s.*	4	0
28*s.* and under 29*s.*	3	6
29*s.* and under 30*s.*	3	0
30*s.* and under 31*s.*	2	6
31*s.* and upwards	2	0

OATS:—

Whenever the average price of Oats, made up and published in the manner required by Law, shall be, for every quarter—

Under 18*s.* the Duty shall be, for every quarter	4	0
18*s.* and under 19*s.*	3	6
19*s.* and under 20*s.*	3	0
20*s.* and under 21*s.*	2	6
21*s.* and under 22*s.*	2	0
22*s.* and upwards	1	6

RYE, PEASE, AND BEANS:—

For every quarter;

A Duty equal in amount to the Duty payable on a quarter of Barley.

WHEAT MEAL, AND FLOUR:—

For every barrel, being one hundred and ninety-six pounds;

A Duty equal in amount to the Duty payable on thirty-eight gallons and a half of Wheat.

BARLEY MEAL:—

For every quantity of pounds;

A Duty equal in amount to the Duty payable on a quarter of Barley.

OATMEAL:—

For every quantity of one hundred and eighty-one pounds and a half;

A Duty equal in amount to the Duty payable on a quarter of Oats.

RYE MEAL:—

For every quantity of pounds;

A Duty equal in amount to the Duty payable on a quarter of Rye.

PEA MEAL AND BEAN MEAL:—

For every quantity of pounds;

A Duty equal in amount to the Duty payable on a quarter of Pease or Beans.

If the produce of and imported from any British Possession out of Europe; Wheat, Barley, Beer or Bigg, Oats, Rye, Pease, and Beans, the Duty shall be for every quarter	1	0
Wheat, Meal, Barley Meal, Oat Meal, Rye Meal, Pea Meal, and Bean Meal, the Duty shall be for every cwt.	0	4½

And that from and after the said 1st day of February, 1849, there shall be paid the following Duties, viz.

Wheat, Barley, Beer or Bigg, Oats, Rye, Pease, and Beans, for every quarter	1	0
Wheat Meal, Barley Meal, Oat Meal, Rye Meal, Pea Meal, and Bean Meal, for every cwt.	0	4½

SIR R. PEEL again rose and said: I wish to fix such a day for the discussion

as will be most convenient, ond at the same time give ample time for consideration. [Several hon. MEMBERS: "Monday, Monday."] We have no wish to hurry on the discussion. Perhaps this day week will be a convenient day. My speech will, no doubt, be in the possession of every one to-morrow morning.

SIR R. H. INGLIS said, there was one point on which it was important that the public should be informed. Although the right hon. Gentleman's statement was commercial, it was impossible not to see that the ultimate object involved financial considerations also. He wished to hear from the right hon. Baronet in some general terms the amount of the burden which it was proposed to lay on the country by the direct expenditure which it was intended should be assumed by the State. It appeared that not only was there to be a great remission of revenue, but also a direct expenditure of about 600,000*l.* a year in the aggregate, of the different items.

MR. S. O'BRIEN entreated the right hon. Baronet to consider whether that day fortnight would be too soon to take the discussion? [Hon. MEMBER: No!] He would remind the right hon. Gentleman that the agricultural interest was the least able to assemble together, and as to which the longest time was required for those connected with it to ascertain the opinions of the general body. The right hon. Baronet had referred to some advantages that were to accompany the proposal. Whatever opinion the farmers of England might form upon that head, it was impossible that their voice could reach the Legislature in less than a fortnight. That House was now in its fifth year, and, whatever changes there might be in the opinion of those who came into power immediately on its assembling, it was most important for those who might be prepared to support the right hon. Gentleman, even though they might run counter to the opinion of their constituents, to be no parties to hurrying a measure of this kind through the House before the opinions of the constituencies could be known. Considering the time it had been usual to give for the consideration of measures of similar importance, surely one little fortnight was not too much to ask for this. And he was sorry that the other side, who said that they had all the argument and popular feeling with them, should seem to shrink from discussion by opposing that request.

MR. HUME could assure the right hon. Baronet that that side of the House were far from being afraid of discussion, and, if the hon. Member wished to postpone discussion till he heard from the provinces, he would find himself in a wrong position. He was in that House to judge for his constituents, not as a mere delegate. He hoped the hon. Gentleman would meet the discussion manfully and fairly, and not try to postpone nor to obstruct the measure.

SIR R. PEEL: Whatever may be the differences of opinion on this measure, I hope the proceedings will be allowed to pass to-night without any discussion of an angry character, and that the hon. Member for Montrose will forgive me if I ask him to allow me to conduct my own case. The success of measures of this kind will not be promoted by angry remarks. Monday next was suggested by some hon. Members behind me connected with agriculture, and I named a day beyond that. The hon. Member will, I am sure, see that the decision on this measure will be founded on the opinions of the great body of the community. My wish is that it should undergo the fullest discussion. On the other hand, great inconvenience would ensue to the country, particularly to the agricultural interest and those who trade in corn, from not knowing what the result is likely to be. To meet the wishes of the hon. Member I would propose Thursday week.

MR. MILES also urged a longer delay. He spoke not merely for the agricultural interest, but for other interests which were greatly interested in the question of the Corn Laws. Those interests had not the voice in the Legislature which agriculture had, and therefore it was highly necessary that they should have time thoroughly to weigh the new proposals. Not only for the sake of that portion of the community with which he (Mr. Miles) was connected as a representative, but for the sake of all classes, he trusted that the right hon. Baronet would see the propriety of giving some definite estimate of the results which were expected to attend the proposed reductions, and of the amount which would become chargeable on the Consolidated Fund.

SIR R. PEEL: I need not say all my feelings are in favour of affording the fullest opportunity to every party of expressing their views; I can have no objection to resume the subject on Monday week instead of this day week; and, so far as the Go-

vernment is concerned, I shall then feel it my duty to proceed *de die in diem.* I have so often been disappointed in making estimates of revenue that I am unwilling to enter on any hastily in the present instance. My calculations of the loss on Customs and Excise in consequence of the reductions formerly made were not verified by the fact; for it appears that the revenue on the particular articles in favour of which these reductions were made, increased so much more rapidly than a Chancellor of the Exchequer could calculate, that I am unwilling to make an estimate at present as to the effect of the reductions which I now propose. The reductions made in former years have led to such increased consumption, that the estimated loss had not occurred. To the question of my hon. Friend, so far as regards an estimate of the results which are expected to flow from the proposed reductions, I cannot give an answer. The charge upon the Consolidated Fund which I propose will amount to 530,000*l.*

LORD JOHN RUSSELL: It is not my intention to enter at present into the subject before the House. I wish only to understand whether, when this discussion recommences, the other Resolutions with regard to manufactured articles will be considered immediately after the Resolutions with regard to Corn, or whether we shall proceed to dispose of the Corn Resolutions before entering upon the consideration of the others?

SIR R. PEEL: All I can say is, that whatever course can be suggested to enable the House to pronounce its judgment most effectually on the propositions I have submitted, would be by far the most acceptable course to Her Majesty's Government. If it be thought advisable to take the Corn Resolutions into consideration first, to that I will most readily assent. I will take any course which may best enable those who dissent from the Resolutions to bring out their dissent—which may be most conducive to the expression of its opinion by the House—on some great leading principle.

MR. LIDDELL said, that he must, at any time, feel considerable difficulty in dealing with so complex a question as that which had been submitted to the House by the right hon. Baronet; and though he rose with the greatest hesitation and diffidence, yet he trusted he might be permitted to ask for some indulgence, in order that he might be enabled to explain his opinions upon a proposed measure of such importance as that which had been propounded to the House. He must assure them that he felt the greatest pain at the position in which he was placed, because he found himself impelled by a conscientious sense of public duty, which was wholly irresistible, to offer his humble opinions in opposition to those which had been expressed by Her Majesty's Government. The right hon. Gentleman at the head of that Government, would, he was sure, do him the justice to admit that he had not had a more faithful, or a more staunch supporter than himself in that House. He had supported the right hon. Baronet, not only since he had entered office in the year 1841, but also, in 1837, when he led the Opposition from the benches before him—indeed ever since the year 1830—and never, until the present moment, did he feel cause for regret. He had supported him, even by anticipation, in the changes which he had made in the Corn Laws in 1842, as he was satisfied that, at that period, the agricultural interest could well afford to submit to some relaxation of the protection they then enjoyed, and he had, under that conviction, gone so far as to prepare his constituents for the coming change. He had supported the right hon. Baronet, too, in the alterations he had made in the Tariff—in all those reductions of duties on the admission of foreign articles—and, lastly, he had supported him, and with still greater confidence, on the Canada Corn Bill. But in all these changes, with the exception of those which appeared to be justified by the arguments which were brought forward, he had kept steadily in view the principle of protection to British industry and British agriculture. He had never permitted himself to lose sight of that great principle. In all his addresses to his constituents—and they had been frequent—he had never lost sight of that great principle, and had never abstained from enforcing the value of it, and with the greater confidence, not only because he had felt that he had the sanction of the support of the Minister in regard to those questions to which he had referred, but that he had the support of truth, of justice, and of right, which he still more highly valued. To the very last moment, then, he had continued his confidence in Her Majesty's Government. A meeting called by the friends and supporters of protection had been recently held in his own county, which was presided over by a noble Duke (Cleveland) with

whom he was on terms of intimacy and friendship, and whose services in the cause of domestic agriculture would be at once acknowledged and appreciated by all. He (Mr. Liddell) had been invited to attend that meeting by personal friends; but so resolved had he been to remain unfettered —so determined had he been not to pledge himself blindly in reference to measures of which he knew nothing—that, in spite of all the solicitations of his friends, he abstained from presenting himself to the meeting. And even now he felt himself at liberty, if, indeed, he could do so in honour to himself and in justice to his own feelings, even now he felt himself at liberty to support the proposition of the right hon. Baronet. But when he heard, on the first night of the Session, the language of the noble Mover of the Address in reply to Her Majesty's Speech, as well as that of the right hon. Baronet, in which he formally abandoned, as no longer tenable in argument, the principle of protection; he felt that the time had arrived when he could no longer look forward with hope and confidence in regard to measures of this character. Nothing could possibly be more painful than the position in which he now found himself placed; and he trusted that he might be permitted to have that opportunity accorded to him which was ever afforded to a Member under such circumstances, of stating the reasons which compelled him now to take a course so painful to his own feelings, but, at the same time, the only course which appeared to him to be consistent with justice and with honour. He was perfectly ready to admit that the first question which ought to occupy the attention of every lover of his country was the great and important question that the poor must be fed. That question he had never lost sight of. It ought, as he had said, to be the first question with every statesman; and unless he could show, and to his own satisfaction, that the support of the principles he advocated was consistent with that great question, he felt that he should not be justified in thus pressing his opinions upon the attention of the House. The right hon. Baronet had admitted a distinction between the policy and the justice of continuing protection to the agricultural interest. The policy of protection, he had said, he could not any longer undertake to defend. He had urged that he could not any longer have refused to entertain the Motion of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers), as regarded the question of the policy of protection. In regard to the question of the justice of protection, the right hon. Baronet had admitted the propriety and necessity of compensation. Now, let them consider for a moment those two questions; and, first, with regard to the policy of protection. With respect to the necessity of providing for the maintenance of food for the poor, he (Mr. Liddell) still held that the policy of protection could be defended on the ground that, under a system of protection a regular, cheap, and constant supply of food had, for many years past, been provided. And could it be denied that protection had been defended on these grounds by the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues? Or was it possible to deny that on these same grounds the policy of protection could be defended at the present moment? The policy of protection had been a principle in operation for a long series of years, and during that period this country had been threatened with scarcity of a worse description than that which was to be apprehended from the present failure of the potato crop. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, in a most able speech on the subject of protection, had, on a former occasion, shown that under the Corn Laws, at no period had corn been required in this country that it did not come in—that at one period as many as three millions of quarters had been imported in less than ten months; and there was no reason whatever, why, under the provisions of the existing law, we should not, if we required it, be again able to obtain as much, if not a greater supply than that, from foreign countries. At all events he had as yet heard nothing advanced in any quarter which showed that such was not the case. Let the House look again at the improvements which had taken place in the agriculture of this country—at the amount of capital that had been expended in the improved cultivation of the soil. And who were the parties that must first be the sufferers if any great change should take place in that range of prices which had enabled them hitherto to pursue their occupation with profit? But he would not rely on his own opinion alone; but would remind the House of a speech made by the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) in 1842—the period at which he introduced the present law—and who then made use of the following language:—

"The protection which I propose to retain I do not retain for the especial protection of any particular class—protection cannot be vindicated on that principle. The only protection which can be vindicated is that protection which is consistent with the general welfare of all classes in the country. My belief, and the belief of my Colleagues, is, that it is important for this country—that it is of the highest importance to the welfare of all classes in this country, that you should take care that the main sources of your supply of corn should be derived from domestic agriculture; while we also feel that any additional price which you may pay in effecting that object is an additional price which cannot be vindicated as a bonus or premium to agriculture, but only on the ground of its being advantageous to the country at large."

Now, in those principles he cordially concurred. Those were the grounds on which he advocated the principle of protection—and notwithstanding all that had fallen from the right hon. Baronet, he confessed he saw no reason why from those principles they should depart. Now, what occurred to produce this somewhat sudden change in the opinions of the right hon. Gentleman? What was it induced him, in consequence of the success which he urged had attended the relaxation of the restrictions on commerce which he had effected by his Tariff—what was it that inclined him towards a still greater removal of such restrictions? The immediate cause, he had told them, was the failure of the potato crop in Ireland. Let him (Mr. Liddell) assure the right hon. Baronet that he had not the slightest desire or intention to address to him the language of reproach, and that what he urged was uttered more in sorrow than in anger; but he could not but feel that the remedy which he proposed for the relief of the suffering poor of Ireland—for the cotter who depended for subsistence on the few potatoes which he grew in the patch of ground attached to his home—could not be in any degree a benefit to them. He could not see that they would derive any advantage from the opening of the ports. If, on the other hand, they could supply the means of a considerable expenditure of money and employment of labour by undertaking public works in Ireland, in such case he could conceive that much advantage would arise to the poor of that country. But he repeated he was at a loss to conceive how the labouring population of Ireland were to be benefited by the contemplated measures of the right hon. Baronet. They well knew that, in former years, the failure of the potatoes in Ireland had been the cause of much anxiety, and that on those occasions extraordinary steps had been taken to relieve the distress that ensued, great public subscriptions, aided by the Treasury, having been set on foot—steps which might have been repeated in the present instance, and with a success, in his opinion, greater than before. Now with regard to what the right hon. Baronet had stated in respect of the success which had attended his own measures. He was not prepared to follow him through the whole extent of his arguments; but surely the right hon. Baronet could not intend to urge that the prosperous state of prices that had prevailed, and the activity which had displayed itself, were the consequence of those large importations of foreign produce to which he had referred. It was scarcely possible that he could mean that. All that the right hon. Baronet could fairly urge was that there were other circumstances which, acting concurrently with his own measures, had, together with them, contributed greatly to the improvement and prosperity of the country. In that he was ready to concur with the right hon. Baronet; but he could not consent to admit his argument to the extent to which he had taken it. He would draw a parallel between his arguments and those used on the other side, when the right hon. Gentleman first introduced these changes in the protective laws. In 1842, he would perhaps recollect, the greatest disappointment was expressed by the Gentlemen opposite, who said that in spite of the distress which prevailed, the right hon. Baronet would continue the obnoxious Corn Law impost of which they then complained. The answer of the right hon. Baronet was, that he admitted the distress, but denied that it was the result of the law of which they complained. Other causes, and particularly the great falling-off of our export trade to the United States, were fairly alleged by the right hon. Baronet in explanation of the existing distress. Surely, in the same manner it might now be argued—at a time when the right hon. Baronet took credit for the success of his measures—that other causes might also have operated in producing that prosperous condition of the country in which he was sure they all rejoiced, and which he, for his own part, never remembered to have seen equalled; for he never recollected a period when wages were so high and prices so reasonable, or when the labourer enjoyed to such an extent the necessaries, he might almost say the luxuries of life,

as he did at the present time. Now, if the right hon. Baronet could show, in connexion with his own arguments, and in corroboration of the views he had taken of these matters, that the price of grain at this time showed any indication of a supervening scarcity, it would have certainly been a strong argument in favour of the opinions which he had brought forward. For how did the right hon. Baronet vindicate the change which he made in the Tariff, in regard to the introduction of foreign cattle? He showed what were the prices of meat then, how great a rise in price had taken place in the markets, and how desirable it had become that the people of this country should be supplied more liberally with animal food; and a majority of the House supported him in his views upon the measure he proposed. Now, let this apply to the present price of grain. In 1842, in introducing the new Corn Law, the right hon. Baronet endeavoured to fix upon some average price as that which would be remunerative to the agriculturists, and, at the same time, satisfactory to the consumer. He said that, taking the average of seven years previously, it was found that the price of wheat had been 56*s.* 8*d.* per quarter; that the average price of ten previous years had been 56*s.* 11*d.*; but that in the latter calculation was included that of the last three years in which corn had been higher in price than it was desirable to see it. And the right hon. Baronet concluded that, on the whole, the price ought to oscillate between 54*s.* and 58*s.*; that an average price between those two figures would be a reasonable average. Now, he (Mr. Liddell) had looked that day at the last *Gazette*, and he found that, for six weeks ending with the 15th day of January, 1846, the average price amounted to the precise sum of 56*s.* 8*d.*; and when the price of wheat was at this fair, reasonable, and just average—were they to be frightened by an apprehension of scarcity, from the maintenance of a system of protection under which all the best interests of the country continued to thrive? He feared, however, that he had detained the House too long with these considerations in regard to the policy of the right hon. Baronet's proposed measures. The right hon. Gentleman had, however, given them his hopes of what would be the effects of his proposed change; and he must permit him (Mr. Liddell) to give him his fears. He had seen an unbounded improvement in the cultivation of the land; and in the North of England, in the rich country on the border, he had seen miles upon miles of draining tiles laid down: and how, let him ask, was the agriculturist to look for profit and return for expenditure of this kind, if the security which the principle of protection afforded him was to be taken from him? He trusted, with the feeling of one of a somewhat sanguine temperament, that the hopes expressed by the right hon. Baronet might be realized; but he felt, at the same time, that he could not desert that great interest which he was sent to that House to protect; and he asked the right hon. Baronet, if any considerable extent of land should, by the operation of these contemplated measures, be thrown out of cultivation, who would be the parties that would be the principal sufferers from such a calamity? Those parties would not be the owners of large estates—those great proprietors who were daily vituperated by the Anti-Corn-Law League as having no other interest at heart but their own—but those, on the other hand, who, not having any very large amount of capital, should have expended all they had in the improvement of their property: these would be chief sufferers—with those small landowners who could not carry on their agricultural pursuits without availing themselves of every improvement, they would be the parties who would feel the change; and he (Mr. Liddell) only feared that a transfer of property far greater in extent than the right hon. Baronet seemed to imagine would take place—and if that transfer should take place, he for one, would not live to hear the reproach of those whom he represented in that House; and who would, if he supported these measures, and such should be the lamentable result, justly accuse him of having caused their ruin, instead of taking, as he ought, means to ensure to such parties the enjoyment of their property. He would not appear before his constituents in any other character than that of an honest and conscientious man. If he could conscientiously give his support to the right hon. Baronet in these measures, he could easily find abundant reasons for giving him the same support he has hitherto done: the only objection he had to do so was, that it would not be honest. But there were other points to be considered in connexion with this subject. He saw a great reduction likely to ensue in the means of doing good, by a reduction of the income of the clergy. Were the clergy—who in general were not

an overpaid body—prepared to undergo the loss of income which would result from the withdrawal of the protection now afforded to agricultural produce? He saw in the future diminution of the revenue of the clergy, a strong objection to the proposed measures. He also apprehended that those measures would cause a great falling-off in the supply of home-grown corn. If that would be their effect, then all those arguments drawn from the prosperity of the country by the right hon. Baronet, in favour of relaxation, would tell with fourfold power against himself; for a diminution in the supply of home-grown produce must be attended with a diminution in the demand for agricultural labour, a thronging of the labour market, and a placing at the disposal of the manufacturing interests a greater amount of labour at reduced wages. These were among the fears and apprehensions which he could not help entertaining; and he thought he only did his duty in standing up in his place in Parliament, and placing those fears and apprehensions before the right hon. Baronet. It was altogether out of his power to go through the long list of articles from which the right hon. Baronet intended to withdraw protection. No doubt a great number of them had been selected with his accustomed judgment, and the removal of the duty from many of them would give great satisfaction to the country. He particularly concurred in the policy of placing the whole of our colonial possessions on the same footing as Canada. He regarded the Canada Corn Bill as a far-seeing act of policy. Why did he so regard it? Because, so far from its being an abandonment of the protective system, it was a means of extending it to the remotest parts of our distant colonies. That measure not only cast the broad ægis of protection over the Colonies themselves, but over the seas which connected us with them. Our fleets and commercial marine derived important advantages from that measure. The shipping interests at large regarded that law as most favourable, inasmuch as it occasioned a considerably increased demand for the employment of our commercial fleet, and caused, together with other circumstances, during the last eighteen months, a greater improvement in British shipping than had taken place since the changes made in the navigation laws in 1826, by Mr. Huskisson. In the wise policy of the right hon. Baronet, in extending the same system to the whole of our Colonies that had been adopted with regard to Canada, he most cordially concurred. He was not, however, reconciled by any arguments he had heard, to the announcement that on the 1st of February, 1849, the whole of the present Corn Laws were to be repealed, and wheat and other grain admitted duty free—a limited protection, gradually diminishing, being retained up to that period. Neither was he reconciled to those changes by the proposed compensation. What was the nature of that compensation? The right hon. Baronet, in speaking on that point, commenced with the unprofitable and wasteful expenditure on the highways. He said there were 15,000 local surveyors, who spent their time in mismanaging the roads and wasting the rates; but did we want a repeal of the Corn Laws to remedy such an evil? In consequence of a communication made to him by a noble Friend of his, now a distinguished ornament of the Upper House (Earl Grey), the last act he did before leaving the country was to make arrangements, which were now being carried out, for the consolidation of the highway trusts, in the whole of his district, under one surveyor. Those changes in the existing law did not necessarily require an alteration in the Corn Laws. The right hon. Baronet would find great difficulties in a compulsory enactment for appointing district surveyors. It would be practically impossible for any one surveyor to superintend a district commensurate with each of the Poor Law Unions. No one man could undertake the duty of surveying so extensive a district as many of those Unions comprised. It was, therefore, better to leave to the parishes and townships the task of making their own arrangements, and appointing their own surveyors, than, by compulsory enactments, to subject them to the inconvenience of a system which could not be carried out. With respect to the law of settlement, what the right hon. Baronet said was most just, humane, and proper, but it was wrong to mix it up with the Corn Laws. As to the advancing of public loans for agricultural improvements, he (Mr. Liddell) had strong objections to such a course. Indeed, such a course must be altogether unnecessary; for persons able to find a satisfactory security for the loan, would always find money enough in the present state of the money market. But was it necessary to repeal the Corn Laws in order to give public loans for the encouragement of agriculture? There was no material change to be made with respect to the

poor rates. The charging on the Consolidated Fund of the expenses of public prisons, costs of public prosecutions, medical relief of the poor, and education of children—amounting altogether to 500,000*l.*—were also enumerated among the proposed methods of compensation. Some of these measures might be recommended, and others objected to; but he did not think they should be taken in the light of compensation to the parties affected most materially by the proposed changes. He had now stated why he could not conscientiously support the right hon. Baronet in those changes. His (Mr. Liddell's) opinion was, that the country ought to be appealed to before this question was settled. It was a question of such great importance, that it ought to have the deliberate consideration and be stamped by the approval of the country, before the Government attempted to carry it through Parliament. He was convinced of the correctness of the views he entertained on this question, and therefore could not join in the popular cry, so pertinaciously dinned into the ears of the masses by the Anti-Corn-Law League. He was not afraid of meeting those gentlemen on the question on any proper occasion. He knew he was threatened with a serious opposition in the county he had the honour of representing, and that a noble Lord, high in rank and occupying no less a position than that of Lord Lieutenant of the county, did not think it inconsistent with the dignity of a Peer of Parliament to make a canvassing speech against him in the face of his constituents, and in behalf of his own son. Upon the propriety of such a proceeding, he should forbear to make any comments in that House. But whatever might be the inconvenience that might result to him personally—to whatever dangers or difficulties he might be exposed on account of the opinions he entertained on this great question—he should never present himself to his constituents as an advocate for popular favour by supporting measures of which he did not approve. He should again appear before his constituents as the honest advocate of those opinions on which alone he had asked for and received their support.

CAPTAIN ROUS said, that when the right hon. Baronet was surrounded by such questionable friends—when in the neighbourhood of Gentlemen who had not yet made up their minds as to which side of the House they would honour with their notice—it might not be unacceptable for him (Captain Rous) to declare that he would support him, and the measures he proposed, heart and soul; and he would do so, because he was satisfied they were measures for the welfare of every class of Her Majesty's subjects. On many occasions he had opposed the right hon. Baronet, but in the general scheme of his policy he had almost invariably concurred; and what was now submitted to the consideration of the House, he could most cordially approve. Some of the Gentlemen on that (the Conservative) side of the House, had been in the habit of voting without reference to the reasons assigned for or against the proposition before the House. He recollected two instances in which the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Stafford O'Brien) behind him, had gone first into one gallery and then into another, on a division, without at all caring about the justice or injustice of the case. Last Session, when the question was before the House whether Australian wheat should be admitted on the same terms as Canadian, the Gentlemen who now advocated protection voted against the admission of Australian wheat, but not one of them uttered a single argument in justification of their conduct. He regretted being in opposition to many of his old friends and relatives upon this question; but ever since last September he was so convinced of the necessity of abandoning the protection system, that he could not help rising and expressing his opinions on the present occasion. He also regretted to be in opposition to his old friends the Suffolk farmers, who had always supported him, and over whose county he might at this moment, if there were a vacancy, walk with the greatest ease. He would not, however, represent any body of men, unless he went heart and soul with them. He recollected making, in 1842, in that House, his maiden speech in favour of the Corn Laws. He was then trying to be very facetious on the subject of the 8s. duty, which he did not think applicable to the emergency of the case. When the potato crop failed in Ireland, and in parts of England when the destruction of the wheat crop was threatened, he was satisfied that something was necessary to be done for the salvation of the country. If the population of this country were increasing beyond calculation, while the area of land was limited, would it not be impossible to provide them with a necessary quantity of food if protection were not removed? He had heard something about

2,000,000 of acres being thrown out of cultivation in the event of free trade. ["More than that."] He had no fear of any such thing taking place, for he was well assured, and all the country Gentlemen must be aware, that so long as there was a labourer in the parish—and labourers there always would be—the land would never be left uncultivated. But the country Gentlemen, who were in the habit of saying so, did not seem to be aware that there was no labourer who would not pay 50 per cent. more for land than its estimated value, and cultivate it with his own hands. Arable land would always produce three times the amount of food of grass land, and that was the best argument against its being thrown out of cultivation. But if there were unemployed labourers in the country, the land would not go out of cultivation, for they would cultivate it on their own account. It could not be expected that he should, that night, speak on the subject; but as he had seen hon. Members on all sides of him, who had come to the House ready primed with a speech before they knew, or could know, upon what they were to speak, or what was the measure they had determined to reject—when he saw those hon. Gentlemen, and heard them declare that they would use all their efforts and all their skill to defeat that measure, whether justifiably or not—he would not have done his duty as a man and as a Member of that House, if he had not stood up, and used every constitutional means in his power, to secure to the proposition of the right hon. Baronet a full and fair hearing. The hon. and gallant Gentleman brought his observations to a close, by saying that in the event of the right hon. Gentleman failing in his plans, of a dissolution of Parliament, and of the noble Lord the Member for London becoming Prime Minister, he (Captain Rous) was prepared, and would be glad to give to that noble Lord the same support which he now offered to the right hon. Baronet.

Mr. S. O'BRIEN remarked that as he was the Gentleman behind the hon. and gallant Member, who had been alluded to as having voted without giving reasons for so doing, he (Mr. O'Brien) wished to remind the hon. and gallant Member, that having reasons to give, and the propriety of giving them, were matters of distinct consideration. If, however, the hon. and gallant Captain wished to serve the right hon. Baronet, he (Captain Rous) would not allude to former votes or sentiments—he would let bygones be bygones. The allusions to past votes and former opinions could not be very satisfactory to the right hon. Gentleman. In reference to the past, none of them had great reason to be satisfied. The hon. and gallant Gentleman alluded with apparent pleasure to the facetiousness which he had exercised on the 8*s.* duty; but the recollection of what had passed since the last election could hardly be satisfactory to those who on the other side of the House had supported that duty; nor could he (Mr. O'Brien) think that those on the Ministerial benches had much reason to rejoice in the pleasures of memory. The hon. Member for Stockport might rejoice, perhaps, that his hour of triumph had come; but that triumph had been greatly marred, inasmuch as the right hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel) had said over and over again that not one of his (Mr. Cobden's) arguments had had the least effect on his (Sir Robert Peel's) mind. He (Mr. S. O'Brien) said this not only in reference to their want of effect on the right hon. Gentleman, but also to their want of effect on the country. The hon. Member for Stockport said the protectionists were stupid in mind, because they were not converted by his arguments; but it was a remarkable fact that almost the sole point of identity between them (the protectionists) and the right hon. Baronet was that particular structure of mind—that idiosyncrasy—which prevented them from being accessible to the arguments of the hon. Member for Stockport. In this, almost the sole point of agreement between the right hon. Baronet and the country gentlemen (*veteres revocamus amores*), the Prime Minister and the country Gentlemen were alike deficient in intellect, and alike incapable of appreciating the soundness and cogency of the hon. Member's reasoning. He did not intend to enter into the merits of this question, nor should he have risen at all were it not for the personal remarks of the hon. and gallant Member. But there was another question mooted by the hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. Hume) to which he (Mr. O'Brien) wished to allude. When he said that time ought to be given to enable hon. Members to consult the opinions of their constituents, up leaped the hon. Member in a transport of indignation, and said—"What, are we here as an assembly of delegates? Have we not the power to judge for ourselves?" But if he (Mr. O'Brien) were prepared to deal with his constituents as the hon. Mem-

ber had been dealing with his, he (Mr. O'Brien) might hold the hon. Member's doctrine, and find great facility in carrying on his electioneering proceedings. But the hon. Gentleman was, perhaps, the Member in that House who had shown himself most fickle with regard to constituencies. It was his (Mr. O'Brien's) design to remain with his constituency, being ambitious of no higher honour than to represent North Northamptonshire, and so long as their opinions coincided with his own, to act upon them. But if he were prepared to go all over England in search of a constituency then the doctrine of the hon. Gentleman might be more convenient. He was, in fact, the very butterfly of the representative system — a gay and gaudy creature, all sportiveness and change, who did not confine himself to borough or to county, nor even, in his adventurous daring, to this island; found sporting among the nursery gardens of Middlesex, then among the potato fields of Kilkenny—[Mr. HUME: I was never there in my life]—now among the heather of Montrose. This gay being, so fond of sunshine and variety, was surely no standard for ordinary constituents. But if Gentlemen on that (the protectionist) side of the House wished to preserve their seats they should vote according to their implied opinions; and if they had changed those opinions they would no doubt perceive it to be their duty to give back the trust committed to them by their constituents.

MR. NEWDEGATE asked the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government whether he had formed any estimate of what the price of wheat per quarter, or of flour equivalent to the quarter of wheat, would be in this country, when the full operation of the measure now proposed by Her Majesty's Government should have effect?

SIR R. PEEL said he had formed no estimate.

VISCOUNT INGESTRE had listened with great attention to the speech of his right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel), but did not hear what provision he had made for taking the averages with respect to tithes.

SIR R. PEEL said, it did not necessarily follow that, because the Corn Laws were to be altered, therefore the averages should be abandoned. They were still necessary for determining the amount of tithes.

VISCOUNT INGESTRE felt it his duty to make some observations in accordance with the principles he had publicly professed when he had the honour of being elected to the seat he now occupied. He did so, not from any wish he had to protect, in a selfish way, the agricultural interest, but for the sake of protection to native industry, which the right hon. Baronet had so ably advocated on a former occasion, and which he (Lord Ingestre) conceived necessary for the salvation of this country. In the speech of the right hon. Baronet to-night, and also in that made on the opening of the Session, there was not a single argument that could convince him (Lord Ingestre) of the necessity of the great organic change to which the House was now called upon to consent. The agricultural interests were only now beginning to recover, in some degree, from the prostrate condition in which they were placed by the Corn Law of 1842. The farmers were beginning to get some remuneration for their produce; the consumers had abundance of food, and labourers abundance of employment. Under such circumstances he could not see the necessity for proposing this great organic change. Neither did he see that what was called the compensation afforded any reason for supporting so great a change. It was with deep regret that he felt compelled, by a strong and paramount sense of duty, to vote against this measure of the right hon. Baronet. Since he had been in Parliament, he always looked up to the right hon. Baronet as his political leader. He had served in his ranks with fidelity—not with a servile fidelity—but with the fidelity of principle; and in now fulfilling what he believed to be his duty, nothing would induce him to join in those expressions he had heard uttered against the right hon. Baronet. He could not conceal from himself that with great energy and talent the right hon. Gentleman had governed this country; and he must ever gratefully remember the exertions which the right hon. Gentleman had used to stem the tide of revolution during the Reform agitation of 1831. The right hon. Baronet, in his speech the other evening, said he could not consent to be the pilot of the State vessel, unless perfectly unfettered. He applauded him for that. He (Lord Ingestre) had joined the ship's company, on the understanding that he was to follow that pilot; but believing that the landmarks and beacons had been removed, and that the ship was going in a false

course, he hoped he should not be accused of mutiny and sedition, if, having signed the articles for a different purpose, he declined being instrumental in weighing the anchor or hoisting the topsails to let the ship go down the stream of destruction. He could not avoid entering, at this early period, his protest against any diminution of protection to native industry.

Mr. F. SCOTT regretted exceedingly that the statement made that night by the right hon. Baronet was not such as to induce him to abandon the system of protection to native industry—a system which, under the auspices of the right hon. Gentleman, he had hitherto supported, and which he believed had in a great measure contributed materially to the prosperity of this country. He had given no pledges at the late election; but as he conceived a promise stronger than a bond, so he regarded an implied understanding as being to an honourable mind even stronger than a pledge. Had it not been that he thought he should be not acting on principle, he should have still followed in the wake of the right hon. Gentleman, whom he looked upon as the Gamaliel at whose feet he (Mr. Scott) ought to sit. Giving the right hon. Baronet credit for great talent and experience, still he was unconvinced by the evidence adduced by the right hon. Baronet of the necessity of the change he was about to introduce. At no former period since he had taken office were there higher wages for labour—was corn so steady in price, and so accessible to the poor. At no former period was there a greater degree of contentment; and this state of things was urged as a reason, not for continuing the course we had followed hitherto, but for abandoning that course. If the circumstances which produced the change in the mind of the right hon. Baronet were unable to convince his Colleagues, he (Mr. Scott) must question whether they would produce any change in the minds of hon. Members of that House. Abundance of corn grown in our own soil had, more than anything else, contributed to the welfare of the country. The new measures that were introduced, the improvements in chemistry, and the increased knowledge of geology, would greatly contribute to increase the produce of the soil; and if protection were only continued for ten years, our powers of production would have outstripped the requirements of the population. He could not conceive what had produced such a revolution in the mind of the right hon. Baronet, and which induced him to come forward to call on his supporters to change their principles, and to abandon all their former proceedings. The right hon. Baronet had introduced such a variety of topics, that it was quite impossible, at once, for him (Mr. Scott) to be prepared for that reply which they unequivocally demanded. It was stated by the right hon. Baronet that the reduction of duty on articles of manufacture, had been about 50 per cent.; but he would say that the reduction which had taken place, as regarded the protection to agriculture, was even greater, and, therefore, both were not placed on equal grounds. If it were considered the vast amount of capital which was invested in the land, and which could be only reproduced by the soil, great caution should be observed in the introduction of measures which might render it useless and valueless. But he had other objections to the measures of the right hon. Baronet—because they were of an inquisitorial character, and by which the Government of the day would have it in their power to inquire into the title-deeds of property, as well as into other details of a very objectionable character. He objected to what was called compensation, because it afforded the means to make an inquisitorial search into private means and private liabilities, to meddle with all that was really interesting in that Constitution which was the glory of England. But the topics were so numerous, it was impossible to grasp them all, especially as he came down to the House without the slightest intention of then addressing it; but from what he had that evening heard from the right hon. Baronet, however willing to afford him every possible assistance in carrying out his measures, and after giving the various subjects introduced that calm and dispassionate consideration which their importance demanded, he was—and he said it with regret—obliged to oppose the right hon. Baronet. He could not do otherwise, unless he would compromise his duty to himself and to his constituents.

Lord G. BENTINCK was understood to say that the right hon. Baronet was well aware that the average price of wheat for the last seven years was 58*s.* 8*d.*; and presuming that the measure of the right hon. Baronet would tend to reduce the price of wheat to 45*s.* a quarter, it would require fully seven years for the averages

on which tithe was to be paid, to work it down to the 45*s.*; therefore for a period of seven years the agricultural interests of the country would be paying tithe on the 58*s.* 8*d.* He would, therefore, wish to ask whether the right hon. Baronet was prepared to propose any measure which would effectuate that arrangement as to the equitable payment of tithe; and which, by his legislative enactments, might be brought down to 45*s.* the quarter, instead of what it now was, 58*s.* 8*d.*?

SIR R. PEEL said, he did not propose to make any alteration in the law as to tithes. In the first place, he was not prepared to assume that there would be any material alteration in prices. It might be so. But the same question might have been put to him in 1842; he might have been asked in 1842, when a great reduction was made in the amount of protection, whether he was prepared to make any alteration in the arrangement as to tithes. The noble Lord assumed that there would be a great falling-off in the price of corn; he did not concur in that opinion. In the case of wool, the repeal of the duty had not led to a reduction of the price of wool, and the Tariff had not occasioned a reduction of prices. He was not prepared to say, that there might not be such an increased demand for corn that it would prevent the reduction of prices. He hoped the result of the measure would be so much of increased consumption that there would not necessarily be any reduction of the prices of agricultural produce which would materially interfere with the agricultural interests. He hoped that the measure, by occasioning an increased demand for produce and for labour, would benefit the great body of the people, without any prejudice to the interests of agriculture.

SIR J. TYRELL rose on the Opposition side of the House, and said, with respect to wool, he had certainly had the honour to be one of a deputation which had waited upon the right hon. Baronet, who had, as it were, put a pistol to the head of the Duke of Richmond by a direct reference to the price of wool, and had said, that as the price of wool had risen since the abolition of the duty, why might it not be expected that there would be a rise in the price of wheat? And the right hon. Baronet had repeated on one or two occasions, that by taking off the duty on wool, there had been a rise in the price of that commodity. He had always understood the principle to be, as had been stated by the hon. Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire, that a certain description of foreign wool was necessary to the manufacture of coarse cloths in England; and therefore a very large importation of foreign wool was required to enable our manufacturers to manufacture a great quantity of coarse cloths; consequently, it was a fallacy on the part of the right hon. Baronet to put that as a parallel case with corn. He regretted the prolongation of the discussion, as it could not end in the House's coming to any conclusion upon that occasion; but he must say, as the right hon. Baronet had complained that his antagonists had not confined themselves to argument, but had employed vituperation, he felt, for one, as he imagined persons would have felt in the Peninsular war, if the Duke of Wellington and the greater part of his staff had gone over to Marshal Soult. Such was the feeling which he (Sir J. Tyrell), as an agricultural Member, felt at the situation he was placed in. He was satisfied that the right hon. Baronet would force his measure on the country. If the right hon. Baronet had made any appeal to the country upon this question, he would then have put the agricultural interest in the same position as before; and they would have had no ground of complaint. The Duke of Wellington, and a noble Lord who had quitted the Government, seemed to have entertained an opinion in conformity with his; they did not think that the right hon. Baronet was pursuing a course consistent with the integrity for which he had always had credit, by bringing forward such a measure as he had introduced into that House without an appeal to the country. The right hon. Baronet appeared to him to assume that the prosperity which recently prevailed in this country was owing to a relaxation of the import duties. Now the reasoning upon which the right hon. Baronet seemed to found this assumption was reasoning which he believed that the country would regard as wholly unsatisfactory and inconclusive. When the right hon. Baronet propounded that doctrine, he followed it up by a mass of figures for the purpose of showing that the lower the duties were, the higher did the prices rise. To his mind, it appeared that if that argument were good for anything, it went to show that high prices were not a bad thing for the country. But then let the House look at what he said about his Income Tax; he told those who were likely to suffer from that impost that the low prices of provisions would compen-

sate them for all the loss which they might possibly sustain from having to pay the Income Tax. Of course he need not remind the House that this turned out to be a complete failure. The right hon. Baronet would have done better, and the House, perhaps, would do well to consider what were the opinions entertained by merchants in the city, and by men largely connected with the monetary transactions of the community. Their opinion was, that by means of steam navigation, and by reason of railroads, the operations of trade were wholly changed in their character from what they had formerly been. Every one knew that the intercourse which Bristol and Liverpool carried on with the metropolis, had of late years been accelerated far beyond what the most visionary of mankind could in a preceding age have imagined. Trade was, therefore, no longer carried on upon the old principle. People did not in these times come up to London twice a year to lay in stock. On the contrary, that operation was performed much more frequently than twice a year; and the result was, that there were now, comparatively speaking, no locks-up of capital; and a capital of 2,000*l.* would now suffice for carrying on a trade which formerly required 5,000*l.* The obvious consequence of all this was, a vast increase of prosperity. The formation of railways gave employment to great numbers of agricultural labourers who formerly were unemployed. But the right hon. Baronet seemed to take advantage of all this, for the credit of his own system. He must say, it was rather too much for the right hon. Baronet to assert, that he was warranted in making his proposed changes; after a short experience of three years, it was too much for him to say that he had made out a case sufficient to sustain the plan that he had propounded to Parliament, and still less had he made out a case to justify him in placing the agricultural Members of that House in the humiliating position in which they found themselves at present placed. They who had so long supported the right hon. Baronet were now told that if they did not continue to support him, they must submit to be exhibited in the most disadvantageous contrast with the Gentlemen behind him—the Whigs and Radicals, if he might so call them without offence. Those Gentlemen might now enjoy an opportunity of seeing what amount of ingenuity might be exercised, for the purpose of drawing the agricultural Members through the utmost possible quantity of dirt. If he possessed more ingenuity he could, perhaps, devise a happier phrase; but at that moment it was not in his power to use any other; nor could he, in any way, conceal from himself the fact, that the country Gentlemen were placed in a most humiliating position. He confessed it occasioned him no small surprise, that the head of the Government should have been the only Member of the Cabinet to explain the why and the wherefore of the sudden change which had come over them. The noble Lord the Member for London was in Scotland: suddenly he seemed to suffer from great irritation, as if unexpectedly afflicted with that complaint with which gentlemen in Scotland are supposed to be occasionally troubled. The noble Lord immediately wrote a letter to his constituents, whereby the right hon. Baronet was placed in a considerable fix. The right hon. Baronet said, that that was a very unfair proceeding on the part of the noble Lord. But within a short time from the issue of that letter, the noble Lord found himself commissioned to form a new Government; and then he was told by the Liberal party that he must include the hon. Member for Stockport in any new Ministerial arrangements. The Liberal party insisted upon that. ["No, no!"] He believed he could prove it; but any one could easily imagine how much that embarrassed the noble Lord, for he well knew that in acceding to such a proposition he should lose as much with the old constitutional Whigs as he could possibly gain with the Liberal party; and it was well known that under such circumstances he would not dare to appeal to the people. To proceed, however, from that to a topic entirely different, he confessed that he could not help calling the attention of the House to the fact, that the right hon. Baronet had not now dwelt on the state of the potato crop; on the contrary, his favourite topic appeared to be the allegiance which his followers owed to him. In 1841, they certainly owed him every allegiance, as the architect of their party; but now it would be a difficult matter to discover upon what ground he could claim their allegiance, seeing that his public conduct was in complete accordance with that of the hon. Member for Montrose, for he voted that black was white, and white was black. Looking, then, at all the proceedings of Ministers, he saw no reason why he should continue

to support what very fairly might be called the potato-Peel Government. When it was said that the great interests of the country were to be supported, he could not held regretting that it should have been thought necessary to introduce so important a speech as they had heard, with so much pompous preparation ; and he confessed that he saw no reason for waiting a fortnight before he delivered his opinion with regard to the propositions of the Government. He could do it now as well as a fortnight hence. As for compromise, the measure might be a compromise with the Anti-Corn-Law-League, but certainly not with the agricultural interest of this country.

COLONEL SIBTHORP said, it was well known he was not a very warm supporter of the League, yet he had received a letter from them that morning marked "private and confidential," but which, as he did not choose to consider private and confidential, he should read to the House. The hon. and gallant Member proceeded, amidst the laughter of the House, to read the following letter :—

"PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

"National Anti-Corn-Law League.
"East Surrey Parliamentary Registration.

"My dear Sir—The operations of the League in the qualification of free-trade electors in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Middlesex, and other trading counties, having secured a majority in favour of their principles in these important constituencies, and the whole of the qualifications made through the agency of the League having been established on claim before the Registration Courts, the Council feel justified in applying to the supporters of their principles to co-operate in extenting the application of a plan the success of which has been so satisfactorily proved.

"As the result of the labours of less than two months, the Free Trade Registration Society of East Surrey were enabled to establish 553 claims and objections on the last registry of that county, and, as another association also substantiated many free-trade claims and objections, it is now ascertained that a vigorous effort made to create new qualifications will rescue the representation of East Surrey out of the hands of monopoly.

"I am, therefore, directed by the Council to take the liberty of urging on you personally the importance of immediately obtaining a freehold qualification for East Surrey, and of qualifying competent members of your family. I would also suggest that many of your relations and friends may be induced, by your strenuous recommendation, to follow your example.

"As in all probability the registry of 1846-7 will be that on which the legislation of the country will turn for the ensuing seven years, and as qualifications for that registry must be completed before the 31st of January next, I need scarcely point out the importance of great despatch.

"I shall have much pleasure in conferring with you in reference to this subject, and in affording you every information and assistance you may require.

"Requesting the favour of an early notice of this communication,

"I remain, my dear Sir, very faithfully yours,
"(By order of the Council)
"A. W. PAULTON.

"Office of the League, 67, Fleet-street,
"London, , 1845.

"P.S. On the payment of the sum of 56l. at these offices, 40s. freehold qualification will be obtained for you, which will entitle you to vote for the Eastern Division of Surrey.

"The above sum will also include the costs of conveyance.

"Application may also be made to Mr. R. Russell, 82 High-street, Southwark."

This delectable composition he had received that morning ; and he felt that he would be guilty of exceeding great selfishness if he had not submitted it to the consideration of the House. He was unable to say whether the letter had been transmitted to him by direction, or at the suggestion of the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government ; but if the fact were so, he begged leave to assure that personage that he had mistaken his mark in sending any such communication to him. He had not the slightest hesitation in declaring that in his opinion the conduct of the right hon. Baronet, in delivering the speech which had fallen from him that evening, was such as to excite the disgust and indignation of the British public. He trusted that the English people would combine as one man in an effort to make the Prime Minister understand how odious to them were his proceedings. He would, at some future day, avail himself of a more fitting opportunity of expressing in detail his opinions on this subject. On the present occasion, he would not trespass at any length upon the attention of the House, but would sit down, contenting himself with this simple observation, that a greater insult—a grosser indignity—a more audacious mockery—had never been attempted to be put upon the House of Commons, even by the right hon. Baronet himself, than that which was conveyed by the whole tone, tenor, and matter of the hon. Baronet's speech that evening.

The EARL of MARCH said he could not think of trespassing on the time or attention of the House, at that late hour, by entering into a consideration in detail of the arguments which could be adduced against the changes which it now appeared were in contemplation ; but he could not forbear saying that never, in the whole course of his existence, had he been so

much horrified, distressed, or astonished, as he had been that night, in listening to the propositions which had emanated from the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government. He was intimately conversant with the feelings and opinions of his constituents upon the subject of protection to domestic industry; and he begged leave to assure the right hon. Baronet that any invasion of the protective system would be viewed by them with feelings of unmitigated hostility. They would never consent to accede to the propositions of the Minister; and he thought it right now distinctly and deliberately to apprise the right hon. Baronet that any movements which he might think fit hereafter to make, with a view to the repeal of the Corn Laws, were sure to encounter his most strenuous, violent, and unceasing opposition. Statements explanatory of the motives and considerations which had induced Ministers to the singular course which they had recently adopted, had been made in that House, and in another place. The right hon. Baronet had stated that his opinions on the subject of protection had undergone a change; and that this was the fact there was now no room for doubting. It was passing strange what revolutions time brought about. In the month of June last, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had made a powerful and irresistible speech in opposition to the motion of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton. He had listened to that speech with great pleasure; but it never could have entered into his imagination that in the November following, so strange, so wild a change should have come over the spirit of the orator's dream. He did not mean to attribute improper motives in any quarter, but he certainly must say, that in his opinion, that House and the country at large had a right to expect from the other Members of the Administration an explanation of the reasons, arguments, and considerations, which had induced them to change their opinions on a question in which the interests of this Empire were so vitally involved. It had been stated elsewhere that it was only a minority of the Cabinet that had voted with the Premier. The public should know how the facts really were; and most assuredly that House had a right to demand from the other Members of the Administration, as well as from the hon. Baronet at the head of the Cabinet, an explanation of the motives which had induced them to abandon their old policy, and adopt one diametrically opposed to it. He held in his hand a newspaper containing a report of certain expressions which had fallen from the Secretary of War (Mr. Sidney Herbert) in the month of February, 1845, in a speech which he delivered before his constituents, who entertained him at a public dinner on the occasion of his accepting office. With permission of the House he would read a few passages from that speech, that they might comprehend how startling, how amazing was the change which had recently been wrought in the mind of the hon. Gentleman on the subject of free trade. The noble Lord read as follows:—

"He was not about to excuse himself for his vote upon that question. He then thought that the amount of protection was so excessive, that it could not be maintained; that the 23s. duty was more than could be maintained, because no foreign nation could pay it; but he frankly owned that in this he was mistaken, for he did not think that that protection was one bit larger than it ought to be, and he did think that there was this advantage in the present law, that it rallied round it many who would not have rallied round it if that protection had been larger, while no one could say that that protection was too large, looking at the burdens on agriculture; besides, it gave a greater stability and firmness to the law; and he did hope and he believed that there was among the people of this country, as there certainly was by Her Majesty's Ministers, a determination to uphold that law."

So spoke the right hon. Gentleman on the 15th February, 1845; and the report assured the public that he resumed his seat amidst a storm of applause. He would be curious to know what demonstration of feeling was likely to await the hon. Gentleman if he were to go back to his constituents on the 15th February, 1846, and to describe to them the opinions which he now held upon the subject of free trade; most assuredly they would hear much that would be calculated to excite their amazement.

Mr. S. HERBERT: I think it will be most becoming in me, and that it will be most agreeable to the House, if I do not in this stage of the proceedings enter at any length, or in any detail, into the grounds on which I have formed my opinions on the question now before the House, and which have induced a change in the opinions upon these great commercial subjects which I have advanced year by year. I say, in the first place, that this will be the most satisfactory course to me and to the House, because in the discussions which will come on I shall be able to state explicitly, simply, and amply, all the reasons which have weighed with

me, and the grounds of the change of my opinions on this subject, rather than give a mutilated statement which will not be satisfactory to the House, and certainly not to myself; and next, because it will not be for the convenience of the House to enter prematurely into a discussion of these enlarged plans, for every argument upon the whole subject has induced me to form the opinion I now hold, and I cannot enter upon the reasons for that opinion now without anticipating the arguments. Of this, however, I can assure my noble Friend, who has asked me for an explanation of the manner in which I imagine that I shall be received by my constituents after I have advocated the measures brought forward by my right hon. Friend to-night—that my belief is, as no man can impute to me any but disinterested motives upon this occasion; as there has been neither any possibility nor wish for power which was in the first instance forfeited, and now rendered at any rate very precarious; as I am certainly not currying favour with a constituency which is purely agricultural: and as likewise I have a constituency among whom I have lived with the personal ties of the greatest friendship, who have trusted me, and, as I had from them, as they had from me, regard and respect, that, even if there should be a difference of opinion between us upon any point, they will never have any other feeling towards me than that which, during my whole life, I have endeavoured to inspire in those with whom I have had to deal. This I will add, that it was after the greatest anxiety I adopted the course I have taken; that I came to the deliberations which preceded the differences which led to the resignation of the Ministry with my mind perfectly made up as to the course I should take; that the opinions which I urged in Her Majesty's councils are embodied in the measure now before the House, and they are opinions which I am ready deliberately and explicitly to defend in this House. The same opinions without reserve will be the passport with which I shall offer myself to the notice of my constituents; and I am further of opinion that when the question shall be regarded, as soon it will be, calmly and dispassionately, by many of those who take an interest, almost an exclusive interest, in agriculture, they will think that I have neither neglected my duty to them nor to the public at large by giving a hearty, a disinterested, and an honest support to the measures now before the House.

Mr. P. HOWARD said, he had listened with attention to the many able and elaborate explanations given by the right hon. Baronet opposite (Sir R. Peel), and he confessed that he thought the equivalent offered to the agriculturists, in lieu of protection, was rather less than he could have wished; yet, considering the circumstances of the country—considering, also, the success which had hitherto attended free-trade measures—he was prepared to give his assent to the Resolutions to be submitted to-night; and he would beg of the agriculturists to consider whether a measure of this kind, prepared by a strong Government, with the sanction of the Crown, could ever, in the long-run, be defeated. For them the wiser and more salutary course would be to enter into the discussion of these measures with a view, if possible, to secure the adoption of such modification as, without materially diminishing their popularity, might render the shock consequent upon the change less sudden and less violent. He thought the period of three years too limited, and that the minimum of protection was rather scanty, for Mr. M'Culloch, the greatest of free-trade authorities, in his celebrated pamphlet or treatise on the Corn Laws argued on the supposition that a fiscal duty of *5s.* the quarter might be retained. He (Mr. Howard) deemed that the proposed alteration in the law of settlement would be a great boon to farmers and others living in the vicinity of manufacturing towns. He trusted the proposed measure would receive the deliberate attention both of the agriculturists and the manufacturers, and that they would be made palatable to the one, and not injurious to the other.

Mr. WODEHOUSE inquired whether the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had any intention to lay on the Table of the House any of those communications which had been stated to have been received from some of the crowned heads of Europe, expressing their opinions on free trade, because, as yet, the House had no assurance that any such communications had ever been received, except the statement of the hon. Member for Bolton (Dr. Bowring). He also wished to know how the moiety of the payment for medical relief, to be paid by the Government, was to be managed. In other words, how was the parish doctor to make out his bills?

Sir R. PEEL replied, that the charge

on account of medical aid would be provided by a vote of the House of Commons, the other moiety being provided by the guardians of the poor in the different parishes. This would be at once a check against extravagant outlay, while it would afford a means of a more liberal allowance to medical men. With regard to the other question, he (Sir R. Peel) would undertake to lay on the Table any convention or engagement entered into by any of the crowned heads of Europe. There had been some strong expressions made use of by the Secretary of the American Treasury, with regard to a relaxation of the American tariff, and he expected shortly to be able to lay on the Table a Convention with Naples in favour of free trade.

Mr. GROGAN wished to put a question, as an Irish Member, to the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury. The whole of the statement which the right hon. Baronet had made to-night was one of reductions; he, therefore, wished to know whether the right hon. Baronet would furnish a document containing a column showing the aggregate amount of these reductions, and another column setting forth the mode in which he proposed to make good the deficiency in the revenue which those reductions would occasion. Very considerable alarm existed throughout the country upon this point; and great apprehensions were entertained that the right hon. Baronet would be driven to a proposition for increasing the Income Tax. He was, therefore, anxious to know how the deficiency which would be created was to be made up.

Sir R. PEEL: I really hope that from some of the reductions there will be an increased rather than a diminished revenue. I have already said that I consider it very inconvenient to enter into explanations on particular portions of the general proposition submitted by Her Majesty's Ministers to the House of Commons; but I may observe that it by no means follows that a diminution of duty on importation is followed by a diminution of price of the home-made article. On the contrary, it can be shown that in those years in which there has been the greatest importation of foreign produce, the best prices have been obtained for similar articles of home production. It may be taken as a rule, that in every year where the price of domestic produce has increased, there has been a proportionate increase of importation of the same articles from abroad. I have said that I will not enter into any detailed explanations; but I will answer the hon. Gentleman in respect to what he has said with regard to the Income Tax, by at once frankly declaring that it is not the intention of Her Majesty's Government to make any proposition with respect to the Income Tax. That, fortified by the result of the experience of the past—although the effect of the proposed reductions upon the revenue may be to cause a temporary deficiency, yet—I am quite satisfied from the elasticity of the commercial energies of this country, and the consequent increased abundance that will be enjoyed from the reductions proposed, that those reductions may be made without the imposition of any new tax whatever.

Mr. CURTEIS thought the right hon. Baronet had very unnecessarily provoked the hop-growing counties in proposing merely a reduction of duty, when he might have received their support had he repealed the duty altogether. He represented the largest body of hop-growers in the kingdom; and he would, in their name, say—Give us perfectly free trade in hops, and take off all protective duty on foreign hops! He called upon his hon. Friends the Members for Kent and East Sussex to see justice done to the hop-growers; and let them not be doubly flogged, both as to corn and as to hops. He came down to the House, expecting the right hon. Baronet would propose to reduce the duty on corn; and that he would have fixed a duty, in the first instance, of 6*s.*, and, by an evanescent scale, have finally abolished it. He would have supported such a measure, and as it was, he would give the proposition of the right hon. Baronet the most candid consideration. He was most anxious that this question should be finally settled; but he sincerely hoped that the right hon. Gentleman would take the state of the hop-growers into consideration, otherwise he would raise a very hostile feeling in Sussex and Kent. He would not press the right hon. Baronet to answer him at the present moment.

Sir R. PEEL: But I must give you an answer—and, if we were in private, I would earnestly advise the hon. Gentleman not to encourage the hop-growers in Kent and Sussex to agitate this question. The duty on foreign hops in 1842, was 10*l.* I in that year proposed to reduce it to 4*l.* 10*s.* That was opposed, and I was told that it would ruin the home hop-growers.

But, what is the fact? Why, that the reduced duty of 4*l.* 10*s.* is as complete a prohibition as the duty of 10*l.* The whole amount of duty paid on the importation of foreign hops, at the reduced duty of 4*l.* 10*s.*, has only been 10*l.* Therefore, having first reduced the duty on foreign hops from 10*l.* to 4*l.* 10*s.*, which proved still to be a prohibitory duty, I have now proposed to reduce it still further to 2*l.* 10*s.* With respect to the excise duty on home-grown hops, which is at present 18*s.*, I think the hon. Gentleman will see, that the state of the revenue will not admit of any further reduction in that item. I am sure the hon. Gentleman, when he considers, conscientiously, the importance of maintaining the revenue, will at once admit, that I cannot, and ought not, to reduce the excise duty on hops below the present charge. I do think, that a duty of 2*l.* 10*s.* on the importation of foreign hops will be a very fair protection to the home grower.

MR. BENETT thought the right hon. Baronet had forgotten the interests of those who consumed the hops. He came down to the House with the full expectation that the right hon. Baronet would have proposed a repeal of the malt-tax altogether. It was a tax which fell most peculiarly on the labourers of the country. Malt was a necessary of life to them. It was a most oppressive duty, and its repeal would have been a boon, not only to the agricultural interest, but to the labourers. He was deeply disappointed that the right hon. Baronet had not made any such proposition. The object avowed for repealing the Corn Laws used to be that it would reduce wages; but the right hon. Baronet had now said that you could have high wages and low prices. He knew the contrary from long experience. He knew that the price of labour had always followed the price of provisions. But new doctrines were now laid down—doctrines contrary to those laid down by the right hon. Baronet himself in former days. But these new doctrines were contrary to those of Adam Smith, and of his own experience. He had always contended, and would still contend, that the labouring classes might, consistently with the interests of every class, enjoy all the common luxuries of life; and he certainly had expected that the right hon. Baronet was going to give them the power to enjoy them, but he had been grievously disappointed. Still, he hoped the right hon. Baronet would reconsider the matter of the malt-tax, whatever might be his determination with respect to the duty on hops, which was a matter of comparatively minor importance. He wished also to express his indifference as to the protection of home-grown hops against foreign hops; his feeling was that there should be no duty on hops, no duty on malt, no duty on anything which affected the welfare of the labourer.

MR. ESCOTT expressed his satisfaction that the consideration of the proposal was to be adjourned for a fortnight, as, in that interval, the constituencies of the country would have an opportunity of declaring their sentiments. He would not attempt to comment on the speeches of the right hon. Baronet and other hon. members; but he would, in one word only, express his extreme thankfulness to the right hon. Baronet for having embodied in his proposition that remission of the duty on Indian corn, of which he had given notice last year. For since he had given that notice, he had made further inquiries into the question; and the result had been such as to satisfy him that, for the interests of both the farmers and the farm labourers, in reference to which the hon. Gentleman who had just spoken had expressed himself so feelingly, no one measure could possibly be proposed which was more likely to promote the real interests of both those classes than the one now submitted by the right hon. Baronet. He was exceedingly glad the scheme embodied the resolution he had referred to; and he hoped that not only would hon. Members employ the fortnight that was to intervene in making themselves acquainted with the proposition; but that the country at large, when they saw the great advantage which it would produce to the agricultural interest, would look on it with particular favour, and that it would be carried by a decisive majority.

MR. WAKLEY: Mr. Greene, I am a little surprised at the speeches we have heard from the other side of the House, because I am quite convinced it is utterly impossible that hon. Gentlemen can have heard the scheme, as propounded by the right hon. Baronet, without feeling the strongest possible approval and admiration. They cannot have heard the whole plan, as he has laid it down, without in the main points agreeing with him in the proposition he has made. There may be some points, without doubt, of disagreement; there may be some few arrangements which may call for further attention in the future

discussions that will take place; but when they hear that in three years there is to be total repeal of the Corn Laws, and that there is to be a previous repeal with reference to the duties on other articles that form the food of the people, it is utterly impossible, I say, that they should fail to express the strongest approval of the scheme as a whole. Now, the hon. Gentleman the Member for Wiltshire, who has just sat down, has expressed his astonishment that the right hon. Baronet has not proposed a repeal of the malt-tax; he expressed his doubt whether what the right hon. Baronet proposed would be for the benefit of the working classes of the country; and he says he is disappointed in the proposal of the right hon. Baronet, because it does not come up to his view in that respect. Why, it is because I am firmly persuaded that it is for the benefit of the millions of this country, that it is for the benefit of trade—that it is likely to conduce to the peace of the world—that it will promote and advance the social condition of the millions, and create new markets for their labour—that I, for one, am prepared at once, and without further hesitation, to say, (and I represent nearly 300,000 of the inhabitants of the northern part of this metropolis,) that I feel towards the entire proposal of the right hon. Baronet the strongest possible favour. I feel firmly persuded that no proposal was ever made in Parliament, as a whole, more conducive to the happiness of the people of this country, than that of the right hon. Baronet. But does the hon. Gentleman, the Member for Wiltshire, consider that the scheme is not calculated to improve the condition of the people? Why, is it not for reducing the price of bread? Is it not for reducing the price of meat? Is it not proposd with the hope of improving the condition of every family? But if that proposal had been made, with regard to the malt tax, which the hon. Gentleman has referred to, would it have obtained for the right hon. Baronet the support of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Wiltshire, with reference to other branches of the proposal, other departments of the scheme? On the contrary, my firm conviction is that it would not. Now, I can clearly see that the next fortnight is to be expended in agitation, and not very peaceful agitation. I can see clearly enough, that an appeal is to be made to the passions of the electors of this country. In carrying on this agitation, I wish the hon. Gentlemen opposite to bear in mind under what circumstances the appeal will be made. I wish them to recollect one little fact with reference to the constituencies of this country. Let them bear in mind, if they do excite the passions of the electors in the agricultural districts and of persons unconnected with agriculture—if their agitation shall extend, not only into the most remote parts of the kingdom, but also into the cities and towns, and shall influence there the feelings of persons who believe that they are dependent on what is called agricultural prosperity, I would beg of them to remember that there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who are the consumers of food—not the sellers, and who have no votes at the elections. Now, I would wish to ask them if they are prepared to arrange every hustings in the kingdom as an an instrument of torture to the feelings of the poor man who has not a vote? I say, let them remember that they are about to make an appeal, in my opinion, of a most dangerous character, if it is to have any influence. For the poor man will say, "See what happens:—the parties who return the Members to the House of Commons, are the sellers of food, and we are the consumers of food—they have the votes, and we have none." Do you believe if an appeal of that kind is to be made, that it can do other than lead to a state of feeling of the utmost exasperation, and one, in my opinion, that is likely to be attended with the utmost danger to the peace of society, considering that the millions of this country are the parties who have no votes. They already complain of class legislation; they say that their interests are not protected in the Houses of Parliament; they say, that they have no voice in electing those who are to govern the country. They say, that they have been the victims of class legislation; and yet you are about to call upon the sellers of food to determine whether the consumers of food shall have justice done to them with regard to commercial legislation. I merely throw out these intimations now, because I am convinced, if the appeal be made to which I have referred, and if strong excitement be the product of that appeal, that it will be one of the most dangerous character, and will, in my opinion, threaten the peace of society. Now, Sir, if the hon. Gentlemen are sincere with reference to the feelings of the masses of the people on this question—if they really believe what they say—if they really do consider that the masses of society will be op-

posed to the scheme of the right hon. Baronet—I ask them, are they prepared to extend the suffrage to the working people—to those who are the main consumers of food in this country? No, Sir, they are not prepared so to extend the right of voting; and I say, under those circumstances, let them be cautious how they excite feelings of indignation on the part of the millions, and induce those millions to believe that they are, with reference to the legislation of this House, the victims of oppression. Believing as I do that the scheme of the right hon. Baronet has been propounded in a sincere desire to benefit the nation at large, without reference to particular classes or individuals, but for the benefit of all—believing that it is one of a just character; believing, in fact, that there is nothing of injustice in it to any party, I shall give it my most cordial support in every stage of the proceedings; and I am sure that if the right hon. Baronet maintains the noble and high ground which he has taken, the millions of the people will carry his proposition for him.

MR. BENETT said, as he had been asked a question by the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down, he would state that he had come to the House perfectly free; he had given no pledge, and expressed no opinion; he had purposely abstained from it, thinking he might possibly consider it his duty to vote with the right hon. Baronet in what he did propose. He had pursued an honest course for forty years, in public as well as in private, and nothing should have induced him to do that which he could not have done honestly and conscientiously. He had certainly expected more from the right hon. Baronet; but he was perfectly free now, if he approved of the proposition, to vote for the repeal of the corn tax. The only pledge he had given was to do that which he considered the best for the people of this country. He had not attended a single meeting in favour of agricultural protection, either in the country or in London; nor had he given a single intimation, by word or letter, to anybody, how he should vote on this occasion. His hon. Friend talked of agitation, and seemed to think the friends of agriculture were about to agitate. Had the hon Gentleman never heard of agitation before? Had no agitation been going on the other side? Had not the emissaries of the League been sent into every village? He had had them in his own village, at his own door, getting hold of his own labourers and seducing them. But the agitation might now be turned another way, by the good sense of the labourers. There was, recently, a meeting at Goatacre, in the north of his own county, of which much had been said, but to which no weight was to be attached, for the accounts that had been given of it were incorrect. A bricklayer was there who was receiving 40*s.* a week, and other labourers who were well paid. The hon. Gentleman proceeded to say that the farmers had a dislike to agitation; and, whatever their feelings might be, they would not attempt to promote mischief.

MR. GISBORNE wished to offer a remark in reference to what had fallen from the hon. Member the Coroner for Westminster as to the Members of the Anti-Corn-Law League having received the explanation of the right hon. Baronet with solemn silence. [MR. WAKLEY: Stubborn silence.] It might be stubborn; but on a subject of so complicated a nature, and involving such a vast number of subjects, it was scarcely possible to express an opinion without having some time allowed for deliberation. He had himself left the House perfectly satisfied that hon. Gentlemen on the bench opposite, who still continued so strenuously to oppose any alteration in the Corn Law, would require at least a fortnight to consider the measure, and that they had no intention of raising a debate on the subject that evening. It was merely by accident that he happened to hear that such a debate was going on, and he returned to the House merely to listen to it. He was sure that hon. Members connected with the League could not be accused of any want of respect either to the hon. Gentleman opposite, or to the right hon. Baronet, in having taken no part in the debate on that evening.

MR. NEWDEGATE said, he was prepared to act in conformity with the course which the hon. Member who had just sat down had declared he expected would have been taken. He had intended, therefore, to confine himself to asking a single question which he thought to be of public importance, and which he had addressed to the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government. He could not, however, pass over an observation which had fallen from the hon. Member for Finsbury (Mr. Wakley). The hon. Member deprecated an appeal to the opinion of the country; but why, he would wish to know, did the hon. Member

apprehend dangerous agitation? On what ground did the hon. Member make his powerful appeal to the feelings of his countrymen against the danger of inflaming the passions of the working classes? Did the hon. Member know Gentlemen on that (the Ministerial) side of the House to be those who were accustomed to excite such angry feelings? Had the hon. Gentleman forgotten 1842? Had he forgotten that period when the yeomanry and gentlemen of England had been mainly instrumental in preserving the peace of the country, disturbed as it was by those who now supported the Anti-Corn-Law League? Had the hon. Member forgotten what he (Mr. Newdegate) had at that time stated out of that House, and for which he had been attacked in that House, and in another place, without notice and in his absence; but in support of which he had afterwards produced evidence, which had satisfied that House that the Anti-Corn-Law League had been implicated in exciting the people? Had he forgotten that it was the agricultural interests which had saved the country on that occasion from the consequences of the attempt thus made? As he was on his legs, and as the question had been mooted, he would take the opportunity of calling the attention of Her Majesty's Government to the circumstance that when the consequences of their present measure became apparent to the country, and when the property of the agriculturists was sacrificed by it, the Government might perchance not meet with that cordial support from the agricultural interests, when danger threatened, which they had hitherto received. Those who now furnished themselves the means of protecting the country might perchance no longer have the means of doing so; and they would also be taught to bear in mind, on future occasions, that the present measure of the Government had been mainly promoted by agitation. The right hon. Baronet had stated, that he had carefully prepared the mind of this country for the introduction of the measure of 1842; who, he would ask, if the country was prepared, had prepared the country for the measure of 1846; who, but the Anti-Corn-Law League? Was agitation, he would wish to know, to be employed against the agricultural interests alone? He might be told that the agricultural Members were ignorant—that they did not know their own interest; but were they so dense that they could not read the volumes which had been prepared for the information of that House, or so dull that they could not form any judgment of their own? And if such were the case, were they not to be permitted to consult their countrymen? He thought the demand made by the hon. Member for Somersetshire for time was a most reasonable one; and he could scarcely believe the right hon. Baronet could have forgotten that on a former occasion—namely, when he had brought forward his banking measure of 1844, he gave a full month for the country to consider its provisions. The course which the right hon. Baronet thought proper to recommend with regard to banking had been announced for five weeks before it came again before the House; and yet the interests concerned had scarcely time in that interval to form their opinions upon it. Were not the agriculturists, then, justified in requiring that time should be given for a due consideration of this question? For his part, he was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Finsbury and the hon. Member for Montrose pressing forward this great measure, involving as it did so many and such important interests, as if they were afraid that the country should have time to express an opinion upon it. His own impression was, that when a Minister had cast aside the experience of a long life, and had declared himself to be prepared to act on the experience of four years, during which, as he had stated, the principle which he now advocated had not been acted upon—the least which the interests affected by his measure might expect was, that time would be afforded them for a due consideration of the propositions that it contained. He would say more. He would say that when the right hon. Baronet had changed his opinions so lately, he would have better consulted the interest of his own character—that he would have better consulted the character of that House—if he allowed a full expression of public opinion on this occasion. He would also add, that the noble Lord the Member for London had, by the production of the letters and evidence which he had brought before the House, paid the first instalment of that gratitude which he felt to his Sovereign, by at once vindicating Her position before the country and before Parliament. He could not sit down without again repudiating the threat of implication, that those with whom he acted were about to endanger the country by stirring up the passions of the people.

The hon. Member for Finsbury had challenged him to extend the suffrages of the people; but he would tell him, what he had before stated in the House, that if the pressing effects of foreign competition, united with the heavy burdens that weighed upon the country, part of which he considered to lie in the monetary system—(and, by the by, he believed the present measure had been framed with some view to relieve the pressure likely to follow from the banking Bill of 1844)—if this oppression proved such as he anticipated, he, for one, would seriously consider the propriety of extending the franchise lower than it was at present.

MR. WAKLEY begged to assure the hon. Member that he had never attended a meeting for the repeal of the Corn Laws except one, and that happened to be a parish meeting. He felt really ashamed to offer this explanation; and if it were in any way offensive to any of the Gentlemen of the League, he would withdraw it, for he felt too grateful to them to make use of any expression which, even by implication, might prove offensive in any way to their feelings. What he had stated was, that if hon. Members opposite were about to make an appeal to the feelings of the electors, they would be appealing to a class who were in reality the sellers of food; and they would thus be incurring the risk of raising the indignation of those who were the purchasers of food.

MR. NEWDEGATE hoped the hon. Member would not class him with those who thought that under no circumstances it could be hereafter justifiable to extend the franchise by lowering the qualification.

COLONEL THOMAS WOOD said, he did not wish to detain the House, but he rose merely for the purpose of saying a few words on the subject of agitation. He supported the proposition of the right hon. Baronet, because he thought it would tend to take out of the arena of politics a question which was now dividing the two great interests of the country—namely, the agriculturists and the manufacturers. As an humble Member of Parliament he entirely approved of the course which the right hon. Baronet had adopted, and he was determined to give him his very best support.

VISCOUNT NEWPORT considered that those hon. Members who intended to support the policy enunciated by the right hon. Baronet to-night, contrary to their own conscientious convictions, and the actual or implied pledges they had given to their constituents, would be guilty of a great dereliction of duty. With reference to one remark which had been made, he would observe that no other appeal than a constitutional appeal to the country was contemplated by those hon. Gentlemen who entertained similar opinions with himself. He must say that he did not think the right hon. Baronet was justified in bringing forward such a measure as he had propounded that night without appealing to the country and taking the sense of the constituencies on the question.

MR. AGLIONBY regretted that this subject had been treated as a class question. Some hon. Gentlemen on the other side spoke as if they were the only persons who cared for the agricultural interest; but since the propriety of abolishing the Corn Laws was mooted in 1832, he had known many hon. Members who were not only wholly unconnected with commerce or manufactures, but who derived their subsistence entirely from landed property, who were the strenuous and consistent advocates of a repeal of those laws. He believed that the Gentlemen connected with the Anti-Corn-Law League had, by reason and argument, made many converts to the same opinions, even among the county constituencies; and he believed that, a few years hence, the conduct of those Gentlemen would receive the approbation it so justly merited. The only objection he had to the efforts of the League was, that they had treated the question rather too much as a class question than as a general question. But, however that might be, they had done great service by enlightening the people of this country on the subject of protection. Had the right hon. Baronet treated the question as a class question, he should have felt bound to oppose his view of the case; but as the right hon. Baronet had treated it, he looked upon it as a great step made towards free trade; for which, as it affected the best interests of the country, he tendered the right hon. Baronet his most cordial thanks. He believed, also, that a large mass of the agriculturists would do the same, because he was satisfied they would find the benefit from it returned to them a thousand fold. He (Mr. Aglionby) conceded to the hon. Member for Wiltshire, that it was highly desirable that the malt tax should be removed; but at the present time he was not disposed to press its repeal upon the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. Before

many years had elapsed, however, he hoped that the country would have the advantage of that repeal, as it was a tax that certainly bore hard upon the industry of the poor man. As far as he (Mr. Aglionby) could then judge of the measures of the right hon. Baronet, he tendered him his most cordial thanks for the great step he had taken in the right direction.

Mr. G. BANKES said, as the hon. Member had stated that he had no fear of appeal to the constituencies of the country, and as his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government had laid it down in the course of the evening that the question was one which would be entirely decided by the feelings of the country, no difference existed, and therefore there ought to be no hesitation in making that appeal in a legitimate manner. The hon. Gentleman had said, that he would have no difficulty in appealing to the agricultural constituencies. Let him, then, join with them to obtain that appeal; and they would be content to abide by the issue. His right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel)—for, after the kind manner in which the right hon. Gentleman had alluded to his observations the other night, he thought he was justified in using that term—had said that he would convince him that this scheme gave due attention to the little interests of the country. He (Mr. Bankes) would ask, what provision was made in this scheme for maintaining the interests of the farmers in general; and, above all, of the little farmers of this kingdom? He could find nothing in it to that effect, or which appeared to have any such purpose. The compromise offered to these interests—to the tenant-farmers—was the consolidation of the highway rate, the payment to medical officers, and the provision for parochial schoolmasters; but what relief would that give to that class of persons? It had been said, that the support to the measure was not confined to the mercantile class, but was participated in by the landowners. Some of the great landowners certainly approved of it; but it was because they were great landowners, and would not suffer by the change; for, by the system of bailiffs, which was cheaper than that of tenants, they would be enabled to get their rents the same as usual. The tenant-farmers would in reality be the sufferers, because their whole class would, in all probability, be swept away by the measure of the right hon. Baronet. As chairman of the quarter-sessions of Dorset, he had received an account of the amount which the criminal prosecutions had cost the county for the last quarter: it was only 377*l.* 0*s.* 2*d.* How trifling, then, the compensation which was offered them in that item! So, also, the alteration to be made in the auditors' charges, and the highway rates would afford them no relief whatever. Suppose that those trifling modes of relief were carried into effect, had they not a right to complain that they should be so mixed up with the great questions opened by his right hon. Friend that night? He said, that if protection was to be forcibly taken from the agriculturists —if native industry was to be left wholly unprotected—then, he said, the class which he represented had no claim whatever to compensation; because, if they were not entitled to protection for national purposes, for the national good, they were not entitled to it at all. That was the ground upon which they had always opposed the taking of an account of the peculiar burdens which pressed upon their interest. They were asked yearly for an increase in the navy and the army, which they cordially supported, though such augmentation was not wanted for the purpose of protecting their fields, but for the protection of the Oregon, which was wanted not for the purposes of the agriculturist, but for those of the manufacturing interest. They, however, gave their support to those augmentations, because they considered that what benefited one interest, benefited all. They had defended, and would defend, the principle of protection to all, and they repudiated the notion of compensation. They claimed to go to the country upon the principle of protection. It might be all very just to amend the poor law, which wanted it very much; it might be all very well to consolidate the highway boards; but it was a miserable shift to mix them up with such complicated matters as had been done by the right hon. Baronet. If they were to be deprived of protection, let it be upon known and intelligible grounds. The grounds upon which the proposition before the House was rested, was not fairly stated; and they were placed most unjustly in a very invidious light before the public, when they were made to appear anxious for such a miserable and paltry compensation as was now offered to them, but for which they had never asked. It was a question to be settled by the voice of the country; that voice was not heard in that House, and he called upon his right hon. Friend to make an appeal to the nation.

House resumed—Committee to sit again on Monday, 9th February.

House adjourned at twelve oclock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Wednesday, January 28, 1846.

MINUTES. PUBLIC BILLS.—2°. Public Works (Ireland).
PETITIONS PRESENTED. From the Grove Ferry Farmers' Club, against alteration, and from Shepton Mallett, and Ashford in the Water, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.—From Inhabitants of Birmingham, against Enrolment of the Militia.

House met at twelve o'clock.

RAILWAY BILLS.

MR. GISBORNE rose to bring forward the Resolutions of which he had given notice, as follows, and which he read to the House:—

"That the Committee on the Petition for each Railway Bill shall, in every case in which they shall report to the House that the Standing Orders have not been complied with, report further whether in their opinion the Standing Orders ought to be suspended, and whether the parties, under any and what conditions, should be permitted to go on with their Bill.

"That where the said Committee shall be unanimous in such last-mentioned Report, or where only one Member, such Member not being the Chairman, shall dissent therefrom, such Report shall be taken into consideration by the House, without being referred to the Committee on Standing Orders.

"That where more than one Member, or where the Chairman shall be dissentient from such Report, it shall be referred to the Committee on Standing Orders.

"That in every case in which a Railway Bill shall be referred to the Committee on Standing Orders, it shall be permitted either to the promoters or to the opponents of such Bill, to be heard by one counsel or one agent on the points so referred."

He stated that when he had heard the Motion of which the right hon. Baronet opposite, the First Lord of the Treasury, had given notice, for a Select Committee on the subject of Railways, he thought that he might have deferred his present Motion until the Report of the Select Committee should have been submitted to the House; but when he found that, notwithstanding the appointment of that Committee, petitions for Railway Bills were still referred to the Sub-Committees on Private Bills, and thence frequently to the Committee on Standing Orders, he had no alternative but to bring forward his Resolutions without delay. On the preceding evening, the Select Committee on Petitions for Private Bills had been appointed; and, in justice to the Members who comprised that Committee, he must say, that forty-two more active, able, and intelligent men of business could not have been selected from that House. Four Chairmen also had been chosen; and of those Gentlemen it was but justice to add, that more diligent, more experienced, more impartial, and more honourable men could not have been selected to discharge the important duties which they would have to perform. But what was the nature of these Committees on Petitions for Private Bills, and what were the duties which they had to discharge? For the most part, they were measurers of lines and readers of advertisements; their object being to ascertain whether any, and what, discrepancies existed between the divers notices and publications required by the Standing Orders of that House. Those Standing Orders had been printed with the sanction of the House, and he supposed that every person engaged in railway surveying throughout the kingdom possessed a copy of them; but, nevertheless, in spite of the great care bestowed on the subject by the Standing Orders' Committee, and by the House, he knew that there were many instances in which it was impossible for parties promoting railway schemes to decide beforehand whether the Standing Orders were or were not complied with. In some very important cases, for example, which he could point out, where the point at issue was the same, decisions had been given sometimes one way and sometimes the other: yet no register or record was kept of those decisions, so that it was of no use looking for precedents to aid in determining whether or not the Standing Orders were complied with. He might, in fact, say, so stringent were those Standing Orders, that he believed he did not overstate the case when he said, that if they were rigidly enforced, there was no Railway Bill, however accurately and carefully prepared, which might not be thrown out on the ground of violation of the Standing Orders. It was the duty of the Committee on Private Bills to examine all Bills, and, if they were found defective, to refer them to the Committee on Standing Orders; and here he must observe, with regard to that last-mentioned Committee, though he had every respect for its Members individually, yet that he looked upon it as in the aggregate one of the most outrageous tribunals in the world: and he believed that nothing save the personal character of the hon. Members who composed it could up-

hold it during another Session: but for their high standing as men of honour and integrity, he felt convinced that the railway world would have no confidence whatsoever in its decisions. Even as it was, indeed, the public had not the confidence which such a tribunal might be expected, and ought to be calculated, to inspire. In the Resolutions which he had read to the House, and which he was about to propose, he endeavoured to remedy one great evil of the present system, by enacting, that in every case in which a Railway Bill should be referred to the Standing Orders' Committee, it should be permitted to the promoters and opponents of the Bill to be heard by one counsel upon the points which had been referred. He had no doubt but that would have the effect of lightening the labours of the Committee, whilst considerable advantage would accrue to the parties concerned, whether as promoters or opponents of a Bill. He would also put an end to that system of secrecy which was at present observed in the Standing Orders' Committee, where decisions were now given affecting property to an immense extent, in the absence of the parties who were the most interested. Those decisions were given one day upon some rule which might be adopted by the Committee, and the same rule might be set aside on another day, by way of compromise, to the almost ruin of a third party, to whose case the rule was not intended to apply. With these observations, he begged to move the Resolutions of which he had given notice, and to which he hoped the House would give a ready assent.

Lord G. SOMERSET said, that knowing well the great attention which the hon. Member for Nottingham had paid to the subject of Standing Orders relating to Private Bills, and looking at the Resolutions which had just been proposed and seconded, he must say that he was surprised that such Resolutions should have been brought forward by that hon. Gentleman. He must oppose those Resolutions, because he felt that their adoption, more particularly the adoption of that part which enabled parties to be heard by counsel before the Standing Orders' Committee, would be attended with greatly increased delay and expense to the parties concerned. Indeed, so far from employing counsel in cases where they were not required, there were many hon. Members who thought, from the great latitude in which those learned gentlemen frequently indulged, that it would be desirable to dispense with their services in many cases in which they were at present retained. He did not base his objection to the Motion of the hon. Member on his own views alone; but he was guided by the almost unanimous vote of a Committee which had had the subject under consideration. As to compromises being acted upon, he should certainly regret the adoption of that course at any time; but he thought that such a step could in every case be defeated by the vigilance of the Committee. Having regard, then, both to the public interest and to the advantage of the parties concerned, both in the promotion and opposition of Railway Bills, he felt it to be his duty to oppose the present Motion.

Mr. STRUTT agreed with the noble Lord opposite in the surprise which he had expressed at the proposition of his hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, from whom, from his great acquaintance with the Standing Orders of that House, he should certainly have expected better things. He took leave to deny altogether the propositions of his hon. Friend, that the Committee on Standing Orders was a sort of court of appeal, or that it was a committee of secrecy. At any rate, it was not more a committee of secrecy than the Committee on Petitions, or any other committee where evidence was not taken. The Standing Orders' Committee had the power of calling before them the promoters of the Bill, and also the chairman of the committee to which it had been referred, who, being one of their own body, would readily give them all the information which he possessed on the subject. If there were no culpable negligence, or that a party had been misled, he had no doubt that the Standing Orders' Committee would take such a case into consideration; but where there was a non-compliance with the Standing Orders, from culpable negligence, and where any party might be damnified by dispensing with them, the decision would, he had no doubt, be different in such a case.

Mr. GISBORNE would be glad to place his views on record, by a division, if he thought that any hon. Members were inclined to divide with him; but as the general feeling of the House appeared to be against him, he would not impose upon them the trouble of dividing.

Resolutions negatived.

PUBLIC WORKS (IRELAND).

Sir T. FREMANTLE moved the Order

of the Day for the Second Reading of the Public Works (Ireland) Bill.

On the Question that the Bill be now read a second time,

MR. S. CRAWFORD inquired if it was the intention of the right hon. Baronet to bring in a Bill for amending the valuation of Ireland during this Session.

SIR T. FREMANTLE said, that it was his intention to introduce such a Bill.

MR. HUME said, that he had looked carefully over the Bill, and he found great difficulty in arriving clearly at its meaning. It would have been better to bring in a Bill to repeal former Acts, and re-enact the necessary provisions of them in one Bill. The greatest advantage had resulted from the Consolidation of the Customs Acts by Mr. Deacon Hume, and the re-enacting the necessary provisions in one Bill.

SIR T. FREMANTLE perfectly concurred with the general observations of the hon. Member for Montrose, as regarded general alterations in the law; but those observations did not apply to the present Bill. The object of this Bill was merely to give an additional grant of 50,000*l.* for the construction of public works in Ire-Ireland. It was true there were proposed in this Bill one or two alterations of the law—but they were alterations of details, and not of the principles of the law—alterations which merely had reference to the repayment of the sum advanced and the rate of interest.

MR. O'CONNELL said, that the observations of his hon. Friend the Member for Montrose would apply only to permanent laws—laws which were intended to be perpetual. This, however, was not intended to be a permanent law of that nature, as it was a particular Act of Parliament to regulate the expenditure of a particular sum of money, of a very limited extent he would say, and too small a sum for the purpose which it was proposed to effect by it. He would not oppose the Bill—on the contrary, he would support it; but under the protest that the Government should not, by the introduction of the Bill, be entitled to hold themselves discharged from the duty of providing against the distress which was to be expected in Ireland in a very short period. This Bill was a small instalment of that relief for which the condition of Ireland was crying out. It was impossible to exaggerate the state of things produced in Ireland by the failure of the potato crop. Indeed, it was not too much to say that within three or four weeks a great portion of the population might be in a state of actual famine, if measures were not speedily adopted to advert that calamity. The right hon. Gentleman was quite right in urging forward the Bill as fast as possible, and he would co-operate in that object. There were some details which he might feel it necessary to advert to in the Committee; but it would be cruelty to delay its progress, and he was ready to support it, protesting at the same time that the Ministers must not suppose that by this small instalment they discharged any essential part of the duty which devolved upon them to find employment and food for the people of Ireland during the ensuing period of distress.

MR. S. CRAWFORD called the attention of the right hon. Gentleman (Sir T. Fremantle) to the propriety of adopting the best means of securing the proper and efficient outlay of the money to be advanced.

SIR H. W. BARRON said, that this paltry sum of 50,000*l.* was altogether insufficient for providing employment and relief for the immense population which would be exposed to the danger of famine in the ensuing spring and summer. He had reason to believe that the Commission appointed by the Government to inquire into this subject in Dublin calculated that no less than four millions of the Irish people would be in a state of destitution in the ensuing spring and summer, and to meet that destitution this Bill would give 3*d.* a head to those people to support them for three months. Was that to be supposed a measure for giving employment and relief to the people of Ireland during the approaching time of distress? He hoped the Government would not suppose that this was sufficient to relieve the people of Ireland, or that it was more than a drop of water in the sea, as compared with the great wants of that country; in consequence of the severe visitation of Providence which had occurred. It was not charity that the people required, but employment, and that employment the Government were bound to give them. It was the first principle of all governments that the care of the people should precede every other consideration: *salus populi lex suprema* was a principle which no political economist could deny. He sincerely wished that he had sufficient power to impress upon the Government the absolute necessity of taking timely precautions

against the approaching famine; and he hoped that the gentry of Ireland would immediately come forward to assist in relieving their fellow countrymen, who by the circumstance of the failure of the potato crop were in danger of being reduced to a state of the utmost destitution. It should be recollected by the Government that many of the landed proprietors of Ireland were absentees; and that many other proprietors, who were resident in Ireland, had not the means at their command of giving sufficient employment to those around them. Under these circumstances, therefore, it was the imperative duty of the Government to come forward and provide the means of employment for the people of Ireland. If a sufficiently large sum were provided, it would not only relieve the distress of the people, but effect great public good, for there was scarcely a river or harbour in Ireland that was not capable of great and profitable improvement, whilst all the public improvements could be greatly facilitated by the assistance and co-operation of the county surveyors in that country. It was said on a former occasion that they ought not to tax the English people in order to give money to the Irish. But he would ask, did not the Irish nation pay her share, and more than her share, of the taxes? Had not every Chancellor of the Exchequer since the Union stated that the Irish people were taxed more heavily in proportion to their means than any other people in Europe? He believed that the Irish people were more taxed in proportion to their means of payment than any other people on the face of the globe. Those who made such observations as that which he alluded to were not the friends of the Union between both countries, for if it were said that the Irish had no claim on a fair proportion of the taxation of the United Kingdom, they would say, "Then in God's name let us manage our own affairs." The Irish people did not ask to receive money from English taxation, but they demanded as a right a fair proportion of the general taxation. He hoped that the right hon. Gentleman opposite would come forward with a more extensive measure of relief than that which this Bill would afford.

Mr. M. MILNES said, that in giving his support to the Bill he was anxious to express his opinion, without saying whether it was a contemptible sum or not—that it was totally inadequate for the great purpose which it was intended to effect—and that it ought rather to be taken as a sign and token of English sympathy and interest, than as meant for a sufficient remedy for the evils which threatened Ireland. He believed that this great evil, the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, ought to be met in a totally different manner. It ought not to be met by English charity or Government assistance, but by the cordial sympathy and aid of the landed proprietors in Ireland, exhibited towards their distressed and unhappy tenantry. That was a duty which could not be properly discharged by deputation or by the appointment of a commission, but every landed proprietor who had an estate in Ireland ought to go to that estate and apply every shilling he possessed to the relief of the people; nay, he ought to borrow money, if he possessed none, for that purpose; and he was sure that the Irish people would make an ample return in their gratitude for that conduct towards them. He would except no one from that duty. There were Dukes and Marquesses who had palaces in this city, and estates in this country, but who, nevertheless, possessed large estates in Ireland; and it was their duty—a duty which he would willingly discharge if he possessed estates in that country—to betake themselves to their Irish property, and bestow from their private means relief to the people. That was the duty of the aristocracy;

"Sume superbiam quæsitam meritis;"

and England would co-operate in the exertions to alleviate the evil.

Mr. F. FRENCH rejoiced to hear the speech of the right hon. Member who had just sat down; and he was convinced that if facilities were afforded to the landed proprietors of Ireland they would be found ready to undertake their part in assisting to relieve the distress which threatened a large portion of its population. His chief object in rising was to endeavour to impress on the mind of the right hon. Baronet the objectionable nature of the 5th and 6th clauses of the Bill. He hoped that some deference would be paid to the opinion of the country Gentlemen of Ireland on this subject; but, judging from the clauses to which he had adverted, it would seem that the Government thought their opinions of no moment.

Colonel CONOLLY agreed with the hon. Member for Roscommon in thinking that the landed gentry ought to have a voice in the matter. He was very happy to find that the money intended to be ad-

vanced on loan was to be lent out at a low and reasonable interest. It was his firm conviction that there would be an ample return for the money about to be so judiciously invested.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at a quarter past two o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, January 29, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—2ª. Turnpike Roads (Scotland); High Constables.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Jedburgh and Melrose, praying for Repeal of so much of the General Turnpike Act (Scotland), as authorizes the Granting of Ale and Spirit Licences to Toll House Keepers.—From Landowners, Tenants, Labourers, and others interested in Protection to Agriculture, residing in the Parishes of Woodburgh, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.—From West Harley, for the adoption of a Measure to prevent the Unconstitutional Proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, in relation to the Corn Laws.—From Bolsover, for Protection to the Agricultural Interest.—From the Royal Burgh of Stranraer, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.

CORN LAWS—PETITION.

The DUKE of RICHMOND presented a petition, signed, he said, by a large number of gentlemen, farmers, and labourers of West Harlsey, praying the House not to consent to any alteration in the Corn Laws, and complaining of the unconstitutional course of the Anti-Corn-Law League. The noble Duke, in continuation, said, he had had opportunities of seeing a very large number of the gentry and tenantry of the country since the opening of the "comprehensive scheme," as it was called, of the Ministers had been made known in another place, and he could only say that that "comprehensive scheme" had been repudiated by every one of these individuals who came from every part of England. They viewed the proposed measure with strong indignation, and, one and all, they were prepared to stand to the last to maintain protection, not only for themselves, but protection for the domestic industry of the country. They considered they had been grossly ill-treated and deceived: for the men who by their support were sent into the House of Commons upon the faith that they would maintain the protective system, were — at least many of them—now wavering and doubting; and they thought that the men who had made such pledges were bound to resign their seats in order to see whether they would again be returned. He entirely concurred in these opinions. He thought the abandonment of the system of protection would have an injurious, indeed a ruinous, effect upon the great interests of the country; and the manner in which the subject had been agitated by the Anti-Corn-Law League ought to be one reason, even if there were no others, that the Ministerial measure should be thrown out. At all events, he called on their Lordships to pause before they gave the people of this country reason to suppose that no confidence could be placed in their public men. That feeling would be most injurious. He contended it was most inconsistent, seeing we had enjoyed great prosperity under the present Corn Law, to seek now to repeal it. The time for it was badly chosen; and the arguments and statements by which the repeal was supported, would prove upon examination most fallacious. He did not intend to go into details at the present moment, because he hoped the subject would be discussed upon the principle of protection or no protection; then would be the time to go into details. There should be no compromise at all. To talk of compromise was ridiculous. The compensation offered to the agriculturists for the loss of protection was absurd. The highways were to be put under surveillance, and the parishes were to be relieved of half of their apothecaries' bills, or some nonsense of that sort. But would Her Majesty's Ministers tell him what they believed would be the price of corn under the new law; for unless they could tell that, how on earth could they say whether they were not giving too much to the manufacturer, and too little to the agriculturist? They must make up their minds what would be the price; and he should like to know their expectations in this respect, because then he could tell whether it would remunerate the British farmer, or whether it would throw out of cultivation a large surface of land. He for one was decidedly opposed to this country being dependent upon foreign nations for supplies of food. He was for protection to native industry; and the same views were maintained by a very large body of the people, men not easily roused, but who were now roused because they felt they had been deceived and ill treated. It would be most dangerous for Parliament to carry the present measure against so marked an opinion against it on the part of a great body of most respectable, quiet, and unobtrusive men—men not open

to the bribes of the Anti-Corn-Law League, but who felt it their duty to protect themselves and their brother men, be they manufacturers or agriculturists. He hoped, then, that their Lordships would not scruple to give the country an opportunity of judging whether the protective system was right or wrong, by throwing out the measure when it came before them, and thus force the Minister to a dissolution. Let the question be made the subject of discussion at the hustings. If it were said that exactly the same question was discussed at the hustings in 1841, he denied the assertion. The questions were not identical. The men who supported the Government measure at that time voted against the proposition for a fixed duty of 8*s*., on the ground that the protection which it afforded was not sufficient; yet these very same men were now found ready to vote for a repeal of the Corn Laws which was to take place in three years. If protection was "the bane of agriculture," he should have preferred the more open, manly, and straightforward course of its abolition altogether, rather than the Ministerial scheme, for he was convinced it would be less mischievous.

Lord KINNAIRD said, the noble Duke had thought proper to attack the Anti-Corn-Law League, and to charge that body with the use of bribes. He (Lord Kinnaird) was a member of the League, and he was willing to stand by its conduct as a body, and he positively denied that it employed bribes, or did anything either illegal or unconstitutional. He would not go so far as to render himself responsible for the statements made or the language used by individual members of the League, because that could not be expected from any man; but he would ask the noble Duke whether he considered himself responsible for the language used at the meetings of the Protection Society?

The Duke of RICHMOND: Yes; I am prepared to be personally responsible for any language I ever heard at any meeting of any protection society.

Lord KINNAIRD thought the noble Duke deserved credit for his chivalry, because language had been used at some of those meetings which no man and no Christian ought to have used. Was the comparison of an hon. Member of the Legislature to Satan, language for which the noble Duke would be responsible? Such language as that had frequently been used in meetings of protection societies. The noble Duke, at no very late period, was not so willing to offer his responsibility, for he formally repudiated the responsibility of the language used at a protection meeting at which the *Times* newspaper had been burnt, in paltry spite; but now he rendered himself liable for all the foolish language of the farmers, and he wished the noble Duke joy of his new undertaking. He (Lord Kinnaird) should be sorry to render himself responsible for the expressions of any party; but at the same time he could undertake to deny positively that the Anti-Corn-Law League gave or offered bribes. Their object was a constitutional one, and they were carrying it out legally: it was merely to facilitate the creation of votes to act upon the Legislature; and the protectionists had openly avowed their determination to adopt the same course. It was somewhat extraordinary to hear the League charged with interference at elections, whilst he (Lord Kinnaird) would venture to say that there were not twenty Peers, Members of that House, who had not subscribed towards the expenses of elections. The country could not be ignorant that in so subscribing those noble Lords subscribed beyond the legal expenses of the election; and he ventured to say there was no Member of that House, either on one side or the other, who had not subscribed either to the Reform or the Carlton Club.

The Duke of RICHMOND: I never have.

Lord KINNAIRD knew that most of the Members of that House had. They all knew how elections were carried. They all knew that at the time of an election parties went to the committee sitting at one of those clubs, stating the price of their boroughs. That had been done over and over again, and he had known individual instances of it. Yet many of those same parties—he would not say individuals for whose language the noble Duke was now responsible—were the people who complained it was illegal and unconstitutional to facilitate the registration and the purchase of freeholds. Talk of interfering at elections! Why, they knew that the elections for counties in Scotland were carried by faggot votes which were systematically created for the purpose; and at the present moment they were qualifying their own servants to vote. The League, he repeated, merely facilitated a legal and constitutional right, and he de-

nied they were guilty of bribery. Those who lived in glass houses should not throw stones. He (Lord Kinnaird) did not know whether it was according to the rules of the House, but as the noble Duke had been permitted to allude to the "comprehensive scheme" submitted to the other House by Her Majesty's Government, he probably might be allowed to add a few observations. He was not going to enter into the details of that scheme. He was happy to say that, although he wished the repeal of the Corn Laws had been more immediate than was proposed, that scheme was fully satisfactory. The protectionist party called upon the Government to appeal to the country. It was, indeed, a strange doctrine, that the Government should not first try the House of Commons. If the Government were beat in the House of Commons, they would, of necessity, appeal to the country; but to appeal at once, without taking the sense of the existing Parliament, would be a practical adoption of the Chartist doctrine of annual Parliaments. As far as he had had opportunity for judging, he believed there would be a majority, both of the people and the Parliament, for the Government measure; but what would be the consequences of postponement? The noble Duke might approve of it; but how long would the question be allowed to exist? Did the noble Duke consider it was possible that the country would very long submit to delay? The consequence of delay, he (Lord Kinnaird) said, would be a sweeping reform in the Parliamentary constitution. The people, disappointed in their desires, would not submit to the continuance of protection after having had the abolition of it within their grasp; and if it were denied, they would not submit to the present constitution of the House of Commons, with regard to the number of nomination boroughs in the hands of the protectionists.

Petition to lie on the Table.

THE OREGON BOUNDARY.

LORD BROUGHAM said, that seeing the noble Earl the Secretary for Foreign Affairs in his place, he begged to ask him a question which, he thought, would not require a very great deal of consideration. He (Lord Brougham) had purposely avoided giving notice of his intention to put the question, lest it should be considered offensive in any quarter, but he was not to be held answerable for having drawn out the truth, if the truth were offensive. There had been no concert between the noble Earl and himself on the subject. Had the noble Earl seen a new argument for the American claim to the Oregon territory, in the shape of globes made and sold in London, wherein the boundaries of the Oregon were described according to the American doctrine?

The EARL of ABERDEEN (in apparent astonishment) replied in the negative.

LORD BROUGHAM did not wonder at his noble Friend being surprised. He (Lord Brougham) would give him the name of the globe-maker in question; and he would find, upon inquiry, that the Oregon boundary had been put by the maker upon a globe before it was finished, and that same globe was purchased by no less important a person than the American Minister in this country. He did not believe that his excellent friend, Mr. Everett, was a party to the proceeding; and it might possibly prove to have been done by the tradesman out of kindness and respect for his customer.

The EARL of ABERDEEN said, he had heard something of this matter, but he attached no importance to it. It referred to an older transaction than Mr. Everett's time. The globe had been purchased by an American, but not by the American Minister.

THE CORN LAWS.

EARL GREY said, he should be sorry if the discussion commenced by the noble Duke on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond) should have terminated before he had had the opportunity of adding one or two observations. There was one part of the remarks of his noble Friend, in which he entirely concurred; and that was, that this question, when it came on for discussion, ought to be discussed as it deserved, seriously and solemnly. He should greatly rejoice if his noble Friend, who truly stated the question really at issue to be the principle of protection or no protection, would adopt the suggestion which had been made elsewhere, and submit a resolution calling upon their Lordships to affirm the principle of protection. There was also another point on which he concurred with his noble Friend. He (Earl Grey) must say, he regarded with great satisfaction the measure which had been propounded in another place, and which was likely soon to come before that House; but, like his noble Friend, he should have been better pleased, if, when so much was proposed to

be done, the proposition had gone a little further. It would have been better, he thought, if the measure, which substantially amounted to the abolition of the protection on corn, had, that object being contemplated, proposed the abolition at once. For his part, he regarded the modified sliding scale, which was to be continued for three years, as neither more nor less than a mockery of protection. It was clearly considered so by those noble Lords who advocated the principle of protection, and being so regarded, he (Earl Grey) was totally at a loss to understand upon what ground it could be recommended to them. He confessed that as a landowner, this was the only part of the measure of which he was afraid. He was not afraid of a fair and free competition, for he was perfectly persuaded that the agriculturists of this country were no less able than the manufacturers to compete fairly in the market with their foreign rivals; but he was seriously afraid, when a change in the policy of the country was about to take place, and the avowal was made that protection could not be maintained, that the interposition of an interval of delay before that suggested change was carried into effect would be most injurious, by prolonging those evils with which a state of transition in commercial affairs was invariably attended. In his opinion, it was perfectly clear that during those three years it would be scarcely possible for a satisfactory arrangement to be come to between landlords and tenants. He believed also that the continuance of this modified protection, would afford an excuse for continuing the great evil of agitation; and would have the effect of throwing obstructions, by the uncertainty which it tended to promote, in the way of the extensive employment of capital in the improvement of land. No man who looked into the matter could doubt that, for some years past, since the apprehension of a further modification of the Corn Laws had become strong, that there had been an indisposition among all persons to invest any great amount of capital in the permanent improvement of the land—that there was an indisposition to make bargains for land for any lengthened periods. As he thought that any great improvement in agriculture must be founded on the granting of leases, and of thus giving the necessary security to the tenant before he could be expected to effect improvements, so he felt that whatever tended to continue agitation, and consequent insecurity, must be most injurious to the landed interests. But, further, by continuing this modified protection for two or three years, it seemed to him that a considerable increase would be made in the difficulties attending the transition. They all knew that the stock of corn in foreign countries was low at present; so low, that the demands of the market in this country, even under the existing law, had completely swept all the foreign ports from which corn could be shipped, and that, therefore, an immediate alteration of the law could be made with comparatively slight effects; but if the measure that had been announced in another place became law, and a modified scale of duties were continued for three years longer, to be followed at the end of that time by a free trade in corn, the necessary tendency of such a law would be to induce the foreign grower, instead of gradually feeding our markets, and bringing his competition with our farmers to bear gradually on prices, to check and dam up the current of importation from abroad for three years, and at the end of that time to let a great quantity of foreign corn into our markets, to the great detriment of all parties; for a sudden influx of that kind would be no less injurious to the consumer than to the producer. He firmly hoped that those among their Lordships who, like himself, were deeply interested in the prosperity of agriculture, would look well into this matter. It was, no doubt, for the purpose of conciliating their Lordships' support that this scheme had been proposed; but if he were right in believing that of all plans that could be adopted such a one must be the most detrimental to their interests, he trusted they would use their influence to prevent the passing of a measure which was really calculated to injure rather than to benefit the agriculturists. There was another point on which he was nearly ready to concur with his noble Friend on the cross bench (the Duke of Richmond). His noble Friend had spoken with something like ridicule and contempt of what was called compensation to the landed interest in the proposed measure. Now he did not think that, on reflection, their Lordships could view this compensation in any other light than that in which it had been represented by the noble Duke; for though he thought some of the relief proposed was perfectly just, quite irrespective of the Corn Laws, still to talk of a measure involving some half a million annually, spread over all the landed interests

of Great Britain and Ireland, as one of compensation for the injury they might receive (supposing they received such injury), was, he should say, to practise a gross delusion towards their Lordships. He believed that the only real compensation that could be made to them would be that contained in the promises that had been held out, but which, he was sorry to say, appeared from the printed papers not intended to be fulfilled. He meant that if the principle of free trade were adopted with respect to corn, so it should be with regard also to other matters. It seemed to him beyond all things just, that if they were to sell their corn, regulated by competition, they should have an opportunity of buying the things they required at prices also regulated by competition; that if they sold cheap corn, they had a right to buy cheap sugar, cheap tea, and cheap coffee. He would like to know on what principle of common justice and equity, the contrary practice was intended to be maintained; more especially with regard to the Colonies. If the English landowner was expected to meet competion, and to take his chance in the market with foreign nations—if he was expected to bear with the effects of free trade, he would wish to know on what ground the Colonial landowner should not bear competition also. The English landowner was taxed largely to maintain the military and naval forces necessary for the protection and safety of the Colonies. Nor was this all: large sums of money were voted annually for the maintenance of civil and religious establishments in many of the Colonies, and when they took these burdens off the Colonial landowner, was it, he asked, common justice and equity, that when the principle of free trade was extended to the British landowner, it should be withheld in regard to them? He trusted their Lordships would insist, when the proper time arrived, for the full extension of the principles of free trade; and if these principles were, as he thought they ought to be, extended to the landowner at home, he hoped and trusted their Lordships would insist on having them carried out with regard to others also. This course was the more advisable, because the remission of protecting duties on such articles as sugar and coffee would afford great relief to the consumer, and would at the same time ensure an increased revenue to the Treasury. In fact, the Treasury and the consumer would be benefited together, and thus Her Majesty's Government would be enabled to afford more easily the remission of those protective duties to an extent, which, in the absence of such an addition to the revenues, must now be regarded as impossible without—what he would much regret to see—the imposition of new taxes. He thought the continuance of protection in the manner proposed, was calculated to throw discredit on the great principle on which this important measure was said to rest, when he found that it was not finally and resolutely carried out; and, above all, it created the greatest surprise in his mind to perceive that Her Majesty's Government should still think it worth their while to cripple and diminish the efficiency of this measure by adhering to the plan—which he thought had been now completely exploded—of making a distinction between the duty on sugar the produce of free labour and of slave labour. He thought this system had been completely exploded, and that those who had first brought it forward had long since got ashamed of advocating it. Considering how much of the language of wooing, which had been adopted when the possession of office was the object in view, had been since given up; considering how many of the pledges then given had been departed from, it seemed to him to be a highly unnecessary sort of squeamishness not to have gone a little farther, and to have abandoned the most groundless of all the doctrines that had then been brought forward. He had hoped that they were now to start entirely from fresh ground, and that the just and sound principles of free trade, now announced, would be carried into effect for the benefit of the whole nation. The remarks which had fallen from the noble Duke had induced him (Earl Grey) to trouble their Lordships with these observations, and he feared that he had, perhaps, gone further than he ought to have gone on this occasion; but considering how, generally, such matters were decided—that is, practically and virtually decided—before their Lordships had an opportunity of pronouncing an opinion regularly upon them in that House, he thought there was some justification for Members of their Lordships' House venturing—perhaps a little irregularly—to state their views on important questions. This principle of free trade was one on which he had always felt most deeply, ever since the first Session that he had the honour of a seat in the other House of Parliament. When the question of the corn trade first came before

the House after that period, he was one of those who had voted in the small minority by which the principle of the sliding scale had been opposed. From that time to the present, whether in or out of office, his course had been the same. His belief had always been that the whole principle of protection, from first to last, was a mistake —that it was injurious to the protected interests as well as to the consumer—and that the sooner they adopted the principles of common sense—the principles upon which every great writer on political economy for the last fifty years had argued the question—the sooner they adopted these principles in their legislation, the better.

Lord ASHBURTON said, that as there were millions of persons who believed that their fortunes and existence were at stake on this question, it was not to be expected that they would be very nice in the expressions they made use of when discussing it. On what might be called the main question, that of free trade, which the noble Earl contended for, the Government of the Crown could never, in his apprehension, be able to carry on the business of the State. He admitted, that the principle of perfect free trade, for which the noble Lord argued on the present occasion, and of which he was aware the noble Earl had always been a consistent supporter, was, if it could be established, the principle of common sense. It was completely undeniable that the principle of free trade was in accordance with common sense; but the question which they had to consider was, how that principle could be established in a country having such complicated interests—placed in such an artificial position with regard to other countries of Europe, which were placed in positions equally artificial, and which had interests that were fighting against this country in every possible way—this country having, too, a debt of eight hundred millions upon its shoulders. How, he asked, was it possible that the principle of free trade, even admitting—which he did—that it was the principle of common sense, could be applied in such a case? He not only admitted that perfect free trade, if practicable, would be in accordance with common sense, but that it would be consistent with the best interests of all countries. The noble Lord advocated entire free trade; but how, he would to ask the noble Lord, would he be prepared go into a Committee of Ways and Means, to pay the interest of the national debt, and to maintain the credit of the country, without meeting with all the difficulties and chances of a loss of revenue, which his principle would oblige him to risk. Take, for instance, the article tea, which the noble Earl had omitted from amongst those which he enumerated; and from which millions of revenue were derived: this was an article of consumption which the British farmer required, and which those with whom he had to compete obtained at one third the price he did. The noble Earl had referred to the difficulty which the British farmer would have in meeting the corn growers of other countries in the market on equal terms. It required no great study of political economy to state the simple fact which this question involved, that while the man on the shores of the Baltic, in the north of Germany, paid his workman 6*d.* a day, and the Britsh farmer paid his workman 2*s.* a day—it required, he repeated, no great skill in political economy to perceive that these two persons did not meet each other in the market on equal terms. Again, those countries were free from tithe, from the poor-rates, and other burdens imposed upon the British farmer, the general rule being that the poor-rate was taken from the municipalities of the different towns, while the country districts were usually left entirely free. All these were difficulties which, much as he admired the general principles of free trade laid down by the noble Earl, were, he thought, insuperable in the way of establishing them in this country, under the artificial circumstances in which the country was placed. In fact, they had no wise man amongst them, who had not over and over again told them the same truths. Mr. Huskisson had in all his speeches laid down the principle, that when they no longer wanted to raise fifty or sixty millions a year of taxation, then they might demand cheap bread even on the principles of the most perfect free traders. Other political economists, down to Mr. Ricardo, had all admitted that the British farmer required some compensation for the disabilities under which he laboured. They differed much as to the amount of such compensation; but all admitted that it was to some extent or other necessary. Another difficulty in the way of free trade in corn he would also allude to, with the conviction that others who understood the subject would carry out the point more fully. Other European countries, as France, Prussia, Holland, Spain, all derived their

supplies of corn in times of scarcity from the shores of the Baltic, or from the Black Sea; but principally from the former. Now, all these countries had scales of protective duties. They protected themselves against the importation of corn in years when it was not wanted; but in times of scarcity they all went for their supplies to the same shop or granary, namely, the Baltic. Now, what was the consequence? The seasons usually produced the same results over all the northern countries. The consequence was, that though while in times of scarcity they were all obliged to purchase corn at the same time, the effect in years when the crop, as in the case of last year, was pretty nearly sufficient to supply the wants of the country, would be most destructive to the British farmer. In such years, all the other countries to which he alluded shut their ports. The ports of Great Britain were the only ones open—they were, in fact, a sort of refuge for the destitute, for every thing grown in other countries in plentiful years—and that, too, not only for the corn intended for this market, but for the corn grown on the calculation of the possible wants of a large extent of Europe, in which the ports were kept closed. The markets of Great Britain would thus be paralysed, and the difficulties against which the British farmer would have to contend, would be materially advanced. The farmer would, in fact, have to go for week after week to market, without being able to effect a sale. Nothing but the very finest quality of grain would sell at all: and what, he asked, would be the consequences? The British farmers were not very rich, the greater portion of them being just able to pay their rents when called upon to do so, but no more. The fallacy, therefore, lay here, that they did not, and could not, establish free trade. So long as they had their debt, with all the rest of the world fencing and fighting with them, the Utopian scheme of which the noble Earl was the advocate, and of which they heard so much, was wholly impracticable. With regard to what had fallen from another noble Lord (Lord Kinnaird) respecting the Anti-Corn-Law League, he would make but a single observation. He did not complain at all of the League subscribing money for the purpose of watching the registration, and of canvassing; but when he saw them opening in every town of the kingdom a regular shop for the purpose of furnishing what he could hardly call fictitious voters, but, according to their advertisements, offering for a sum of 45*l.* to give a vote in any county; and when a majority of two thousand on one side, in a particular county—Lancashire—had been by this means converted into a minority of one thousand, he would ask whether such a system ought to be allowed to continue, if the present constitution of the Empire was to be maintained?

LORD MONTEAGLE observed, that the doctrine just propounded by his noble Friend they had often heard elsewhere, namely, that all customs duties were against the principle of free trade. Now, this opinion, which had been put prominently forward by his noble Friend, as well as by some extreme advocates of free trade, was carrying the argument in favour of free trade far beyond its legitimate principle. He protested against the assumption that the imposition of revenue duties was to be considered as obstructive to the system of free trade; and he was surprised that his noble Friend, with his extensive knowledge on the subject, and with his great experience, should have started such an objection; and he must say that it was a most unexpected and singular observation, coming from such a source. He was surprised to hear his noble Friend allude to the tea duty, and the tobacco duty, as being against the principles of free trade. These duties might, indeed, be too high to insure the largest return of revenue—they might have passed the *maximum* point of productiveness; but how it was possible to show that they were against free trade he could not understand. Until we could produce tea and tobacco in this country, the duties on these commodities had no more to do with protection or with the principles of free trade, than any subject of foreign policy which could be brought forward. It appeared to him that the course taken by his noble Friend was not the most legitimate mode of arguing the question. He would not refer to old doctrines; because he thought it was not very just, nor could it be very agreeable to argue the case on personal grounds; but he must say, in reference to the persons who had been lately attacked upon this subject—his noble Friend himself had often been attacked upon it—that he had known very few men indeed who had been perfectly consistent on the subject of the Corn Laws. But there was one peculiarity in these changes of opinion. They were

all in one direction—in favour, and not against, freedom of trade. With one exception—a very strong exception he admitted—and that was his noble Friend, all who changed their opinions were persons who had previously adopted the doctrine of protection and restriction of commerce, who had abandoned it by degrees. Even the Legislature of the country, in all its alterations of the Corn Laws,from the year 1815 up to the present time, had been departing steadily from the doctrine of protection, and gradually approximating to that of free trade. Let them compare the Bill of 1815, which his noble Friend so vigorously opposed, with the Act of 9th George IV., and again let them compare the 9th George IV., with the Act of 1842, and they would find that the cause had been steadily advancing, notwithstanding the national burdens, notwithstanding the progress of civilization, in the cause of free trade. His noble Friend considered freedom of commerce to be inconsistent with the interests of the country, and with its progress in wealth; but, without referring further to the opinions of noble Lords and right hon. Gentlemen, he might be permitted to direct their attention to a most important document. He referred to the celebrated petition of the merchants of London, presented to the other House by his noble Friend, at a time when the burdens of the country were greater than they are now, in which the doctrine of free trade was laid down in the most lucid, the most admirable, and, at the same time, most absolute manner. He could refer to that most important document, in which his noble Friend had entirely concurred, as a justification of his denial that taxation imposed on importation for the sole purpose of revenue was an obstacle to free trade. But supposing that these taxes were imposed only for revenue purposes, to be extended in maintenance of our establishments, and the payment of the interest of the debt, these could only be regarded as legitimate taxes, and however onerous they might be, they only furnished a stronger argument for leaving the industry of the country unfettered and unshackled —leaving every possible reward to the labours of the merchant, and to the powers of production of the farmers and manufacturers; and this he contended was best done by abandoning protection altogether. With reference to one part of the plan submitted by the Government to the other House, he concurred with his noble Friend (Lord Grey), that, viewing it as an agricultural question, an adherence to the interval of three years of duty previous to the total abolition of the Corn Laws, would prove greatly prejudicial to the interests of those classes for whose benefit it was now proposed. But it was not for him to object, if those who were mainly concerned differed from him in opinion on that point: he would not reject the Bill on that account; for, taking the measure as a whole, he considered that it was the greatest step that had hitherto been taken in the improvement of the commercial legislation of the country. He should have preferred it if the measure had been brought immediately into full operation; but he trusted that the agricultural interest, when they came to consider the effect of the proposed limitation, with a free trade in corn in prospect, to be established after an interval of three years, would arrive at the conclusion that it would be better for their interests at once to bring the measure into full operation; and if it should appear that the parties most interested objected to the continuance of the interval of restricted trade, he trusted that the Government would consent to abandon it. He must protest, in passing, against the doctrine of his noble Friend, that tithes should be considered a burden upon land, for which the landed interest was entitled to protection. He could on this subject rely on the authority of Mr. Ricardo, who clearly showed that when tithes became a rent charge, they ought not to be considered as a peculiar burden on land, augmenting the cost of production. Tithes were only a different mode of apportioning the produce. They never had belonged to the landlord, and therefore neither the landlord nor the occupier of the land had any claim to protection in that respect. He could not conceive how tithes could be brought forward by his noble Friend as an argument against free trade.

The DUKE of RICHMOND said, that it should be remembered that the farmers were obliged to employ even more men than they really wanted. Before establishing free trade this state of things should be got rid of. If the Legislature was determined to make corn cheap, the farmers should be enabled to get their labour at the cheapest possible rate. He knew, that the lowering the wages of the labourers would be most repugnant to their feelings; but still the circumstances should be taken into consideration. With respect to the malt tax, he would ask, why not remove

it, and give the labouring classes cheap beer as well as cheap bread? Why, he would ask, was it proposed to reduce the duty on brandy, unless they sought to make a greater number of drunken people about the streets? Perhaps, however, the object was to do an injury to the smugglers. Now, he regarded a smuggler and a free trader in the same light. The smuggler was a brave man, and the free trader was a reckless man. He considered that the Government should have made a reduction in the malt tax. It appeared, however, that Government would not do this, because they feared that the Leaguers would say that it was a boon to the farmers, whereas it would be only a boon to the consumers of malt. He did not think that it was generally expedient to take up the time of the House on measures of this kind; but when he was called upon to present between four and five hundred petitions from farmers demanding protection to native industry, he trusted that the House would not prevent discussion, as he conceived that those persons had a right to be heard, instead of the petitions at once being placed in the blue bag. For his own part, he thought that it would be better to have free trade at once; but this was only his own individual opinion; but he knew that the great body of the farmers did not concur with him in this opinion. The farmers were in hopes, that if the interval continued, circumstances might arise which might produce a change of opinion; and that that system of protection which had always existed in this country would be continued. All that the farmers required was fair play, and that the Legislature should not lightly overturn a system which had existed for ages.

RAILWAY BUSINESS.

The EARL of DALHOUSIE said, that in rising for the purpose of proposing to their Lordships to appoint a Committee for the purpose of considering the mode of dealing with railway business in that House during the present Session, he should endeavour to lay before their Lordships, and to state, as briefly as he could, the facts and grounds upon which it appeared to him to be desirable to consider the mode of dealing with that class of Private Bill business connected with railways, that was likely to occupy so much of their attention. In former years, the amount of Railway Bills brought under the consideration of the House, had been but inconsiderable. In the Session of 1845, however, it appeared from the Returns on the Table, that there were deposited with the Board of Trade 248 railway projects; but during the present year, up to the 30th of November last, there were deposited in like manner with the Board of Trade the plans and sections of 815, of which 606 were for railways in England, 126 for Scotland, and eighty-three for Ireland. Before the 31st of December, there was a very considerable reduction of that number; but upon that day there were deposited in the Private Bill Office, and now stood there, Bills for railways to the number of 687. He did not wish their Lordships to imagine that that number was likely to come under the consideration of the House. Some had already disappeared. Some projects had formed junctions with others; and from the extreme haste and inaccuracy with which many of those schemes had been prepared, no doubt a very great number more would disappear from that list, when they came before the Standing Orders' Committee, before coming under the consideration of Parliament; but, after making every allowance for all these contingencies, there could be no doubt whatever that the number of Railway Bills that would come under the consideration of Parliament in the present Session would infinitely exceed the number in any previous Session; and when their Lordships considered, even with the limited number of last Session, the very great labour that pressed upon the Committees of both Houses of Parliament, and of the other House especially; and when they adverted further to the fact that this enormous mass of legislation was in addition to the ordinary Private Bill business that came before Parliament, he thought it would be almost impossible to find committees enough to take these numerous schemes into consideration; or, if they could find Members enough to constitute committees for the purpose, that those committees could give to them sufficient attention to be satisfactory either to themselves, or to the public. Upon that ground, therefore, if there were no other, some interference would be necessary; but there was a still graver difficulty than that, and that was the amount of capital proposed by those Bills to be employed in the formation of lines of railway. The capital, as shown by the official statements of the dif-

ferent companies which it was supposed would be required by those 687 Bills, amounted to not less than 370,000,000*l.* But he did not wish their Lordships to suppose that that amount of capital was likely to be called for; because, in addition to the number of Bills that would, no doubt, be relinquished, there were a vast number of competing schemes, one only of which could, of course, receive the sanction of Parliament. But after making every deduction from the estimated sum upon that account, and taking even the lowest sum he had heard mentioned by those who were most interested in making it appear as small as possible, it was supposed that the lowest amount of capital that would be called for, to carry into operation the schemes provided by the Bills which it was proposed to pass this Session, would be upwards of 100,000,000*l.* of money. But they were not in a condition to calculate the total amount that would be demanded for railway purposes during the coming years, unless they considered the amount of their present obligations. In the last Session, there were sanctioned 118 Railway Bills, the capital of which was about 56,000,000*l.*, and in the previous year there were upwards of forty Railway Bills, involving capital to the amount of upwards of 14,000,000*l.* In the last two years, therefore, there had been authorized to be laid out in railways very nearly 70,000,000*l.* Their Lordships would recollect that the demand for that money was not gradual, so as to lighten the difficulty of meeting it. It appeared that the time employed in the completion of these railways, did not ordinarily exceed three years. The demand, then, for that 70,000,000*l.* would fall within three years; and, after making a deduction for the expenditure already made for the Bills of 1844, their Lordships must calculate that during the years 1846, 1847, and 1848, there would be on an average a demand of 20,000,000*l.* for each of these years, even as things stood at present. Therefore, taking the lowest estimate of the amount of capital, for the railways which would be brought under the consideration of Parliament in the present Session at 100,000,000*l.*, and adding it to the 70,000,000*l.* already sanctioned, he thought it was impossible for any man to consider the possibility of Parliament going on to take into consideration that mass of Bills, involving so vast an amount of capital, without feeling the necessity of looking also to the effect of those schemes on the general interests of the country. It seemed then to be necessary for Parliament now to consider whether the diversion of such a mass of capital into the one line of railway investment might not be at variance with the general good; whether it would not have an injurious effect upon trade generally; and whether some sort of limitation should not by some means be placed upon that extraordinary expenditure. He was not unnecessarily anticipating the inconvenience that would arise, for he was sure it must be perfectly notorious to all, that the inconvenience which he anticipated was even already beginning to be felt. It was perfectly well known, from the information which was coming from every part of the United Kingdom, or at all events from every part of Great Britain, that already the price of labour was enhanced to an extraordinary, and almost to an inconvenient degree. The price of materials was also enhanced; and if they were to have a further expenditure, it would have the effect of driving up still higher the price of labour and materials — an effect that must everywhere be felt to be most inconvenient. He would go farther than that, and say, he believed it was not for the interest of railway enterprise itself that unbounded sanction should be given to the demand of capital for it. He believed the effect of it would be to drive up prices in the manner he had described. Indeed, he had heard it said, that it was unnecessary for Parliament to interfere at all; because the price of labour would be so high as to prevent the full execution of all the plans. However, he thought their Lordships would not think it convenient that they should pass Bills for the incorporation of those companies, with vast capital, and armed with great powers — powers which, if the lines were not constructed, they would keep suspended over the heads of all those who were affected by them, whilst in the meantime they would deprive the public of the advantages which it was intended they should derive, and in consideration of which Parliament was induced to grant those great powers to them. On the other hand, there might be companies who would go on at all hazards till they should have expended all their money before they had by any means concluded their undertaking, and the consequence would be, that in both cases the railway people themselves would not be benefited, and the country would be left without the advantages intended by the Legis-

lature to be provided for them. On all these grounds—in consideration of the extreme difficulty felt in conducting the business; in consideration of the risk which he thought might be involved in the division of so great an additional capital on railways; and in consideration of the interests of parties engaged in railway undertakings themselves—it was wise to consider whether they could safely pursue the course they had heretofore followed in railway legislation; and whether they ought not to place some sort of limitation on that expenditure. It had been remarked the other evening by a noble Marquess, whom he expected to have then seen in his place (the Marquess of Clanricarde), that it was the duty of the Government to have come down with some specific plan to recommend to Parliament, and that it was unworthy of the Government to apply for the appointment of a Committee. The noble Marquess said, that it was unworthy of the Ministry to throw the responsibility from their own shoulders to those of Parliament. But it was not in the power of the Executive Government to determine what course should be adopted; nor did they shift the responsibility, for the responsibility must ultimately have rested with Parliament; and even if it had been in their power, seeing that there was already in existence a system which had worked well, and which had been approved of, and adopted by Parliament itself, it would have been unbecoming in the Government to come down with a demand for the adoption of some other plan, without giving the opportunity to Parliament to consider the system in existence, before adopting any amendments. He admitted that it was the duty of the Government to take these matters into consideration, and to arrange the mode in which Parliament could deal with them with the least possible delay; and to give their advice as to the course which should be pursued. That the Government had done, and on the very first day of the Session notice had been given in the other House of the appointment of a Committee; and a Select Committee had been then appointed to consider the existing state of Private Bill business. In the meantime, means would be afforded by the aid of maps, distinguishing the different lines of railroad already constructed, and those sanctioned by Parliament, and those now to be brought under their consideration, for knowing the districts still to be accommodated, and showing the enormity and complexity of the schemes that were now to be submitted to Parliament. The schemes would also be classified as they were last year; and again it would be shown what were the particular objects of each scheme. It would have been fruitless and impossible in that or in the other House of Parliament for the Government to have laid before the House any general scheme, and to have invited discussion upon it, since the result would have been, that, after eliciting as many opinions as there were Members in the House, the scheme would have been referred to a Committee after all. The right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government had moved for a Committee in the other House; that Committee had already entered upon its inquiries, and he now moved for a similar Committee in that House. If this Committee were granted, the Government would be prepared to lay before it all the information they had collected; and to state not only their views with respect to railroad legislation, but to suggest also the course which they thought it would be wise for Parliament, under existing circumstances, to adopt. If the views of the Committee should be in accordance with the opinions of the Government, the Report would be presented to the House, backed by the authority of those Members of the House who had most devoted their attention to the subject; but, upon the other hand, if the Committee did not approve of the views of the Government, such alterations might be proposed as should be considered to render the plan most effectual. There were other matters which might come under the consideration of that Committee; and he did not despair that some plan could be suggested, or some arrangement made, that would facilitate the transaction of railway business between the two Houses of Parliament, and not only conduce to the convenience of the Houses, but to the benefit of the parties interested. Under these circumstances, looking at the impossibility of working the system as it now stood, and looking at the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, he would move—

"That a Select Committee be appointed to consider the Mode in which the House shall deal with the Railway Bills proposed to be submitted to the House during the present Session."

LORD BROUGHAM expressed his entire approval of the course which the noble Lord proposed to pursue. He thought this was the most convenient mode of dealing with a subject which, as every one must see, was very complicated in its de-

tails, and very extensive in its relations. He agreed, too, in the expressions of the noble Lord with reference to the point on which the greatest alarm was entertained —the immense amount of capital which had been, and was about to be, invested in these undertakings. God forbid that he should appear to coincide in any such doctrine, as that Government should in any way interfere with the application of capital. That would be the wildest, maddest, of all possible visions; but if Parliament called on to give extraordinary, nay, even extravagant powers, in certain cases, it must not, if it thought right to adopt checks and precautions, be said to interfere with the voluntary use and employment of capital, but rather to employ a salutary restraint where those extraordinary powers appeared to involve the distraction of capital from natural, and its investment in artificial employments. He had never said, and never contemplated, that it was not right to make grants for railway purposes, provided they were made with a proper degree of care and circumspection; but when he was called upon to extend those grants to the extent spoken of by the noble Lord—from twenty millions even up to fifty-three millions of money for the next three years—it did appear to him that it behoved Parliament to pause and institute inquiry before it proceeded headlong in such a career. There was another part of the subject not broached by his noble Friend, on which he (Lord Brougham) hoped he would be heard by their Lordships; or, if he were a Member of the Committee, he hoped to be heard on the subject in Committee. He thought it to be of consequence to the character of Parliament that there should be a due and satisfactory performance of its functions in dealing with that mass of business, and that they should give such skilful experience and satisfactory attention to those Bills, as he (Lord Brougham) did not think, with all psssible respect for both Houses of Parliament, could by possibility be given by them if the Private Bill business was to continue precisely on the same footing as it was. He (Lord Brougham) was as jealous of the just and due privileges of Parliament as any Member of their House could possibly be. God forbid those just privileges should ever be interfered with, or that any attempt should be made to transfer them to any other quarter; but he was persuaded that to vest in Parliamentary Committees—in the very worst tribunals that mortal man's wit ever devised — the entire management of so enormous a proportion of the judicial business of the nation—for judicial business it was—to permit such a tribunal to sit in judgment on such a mass of property as was daily subject to the decision of Committees of that House—property exceeding, by a hundredfold, all the property under litigation in the Courts of Law, in the Courts of Equity, ay, and in the Courts of Quarter Sessions to boot—to vest in such a species of tribunal such powers, such authority, such responsibility, was, in his opinion, an arrangement so ill adapted to public exigencies, so little calculated to satisfy suitors, that he did hope that in that House an early opportunity would be afforded him of stating to their Lordships the result of his experience, in both Houses of Parliament, and also in his professional and judicial capacity, for the purpose, and with the view, of helping them to come to an arrangement more satisfactory, and more suited, not only to the people, who were their suitors, but, he would add, to their own dignity and authority.

Lord KINNAIRD was glad to hear of the noble Lord's intention. He thought that by bringing the subject of Private Business under the consideration of the whole House, the noble Lord would be doing an essential service to the public. With regard to this Committee, he much wished that its deliberations could be extended to the subject of consolidating railways. He believed that, in several cases, one line was now working against another; and that this was a great cause of those irregularities which resulted in accidents more or less serious. In the course of his own travelling experience, he had often found that, where there was cause for complaint, the blame was shifted to the management of some other line; and that he got no redress, because each party insisted in laying the blame upon the other. With reference to another branch of the subject, he wished to take this opportunity of giving a notice: it was, that on Monday next he would move for a Return of the Fees paid and payable in the House on the introduction of Railway Bills, and of petitions connected with them. He understood that these fees were enormous; that whilst, for instance, the expense of opposing a Bill on the part of a petitioner was about 800*l.*, the fees were not less than 300*l.* of the money. In a matter

where justice was involved, no man ought, in his opinion, to be put to such costs as these fees entailed.

LORD ASHBURTON said, it seemed to him that something might be provided with respect to the inconvenience mentioned by the noble Lord; but not by this Committee. He approved of the appointment of the Committee; but if many of these adventures were to be put off to a distant period, and if the money was to be locked up, and professional labour uselessly expended, it was of importance that an early decision should be come to on the subject; and he, therefore, hoped that the Committee would sit assiduously. Amongst other arrangements, it was highly desirable that the railway business should be brought under the consideration of that House at an earlier period of the Session. Under the present system the Bills often came up to that House at a late period of the Session, and then they incurred much odium for their not being passed. He perfectly agreed in all that had been stated by the noble Lord as to the necessity of putting some limitation on the calls for capital and labour in this country. They must recollect a little how some of these schemes were got up. A country attorney and an engineer were all the staff necessary to prepare a "great competing line;" and surely therefore it was necessary to put a check on a system so peculiarly liable to abuse. He felt, moreover, that such a limitation was not more necessary on monetary considerations than on considerations having reference to labour. It was, no doubt, for the public interest, that there should be abundance of employment, which involved, of course, high rates of wages; and he believed that at present there was that abundance of employment with its necessary accompaniment. But how long, let him ask, was this state of things to last? If substantial good was to accrue to the country, the employment must be spread over a series of successive years, and must not merely serve the purposes of securing a temporary advantage. They must beware how they scattered away their money all at once. They might take a warning on the point of what had occurred at former periods of temporary prosperity. Any one could recollect during the last war how prosperous all appeared, whilst 15,000,000*l.* or 20,000,000*l.* were raised and spent each year, being laid out in the expenses of that war. They knew what was the prosperity then. The same system showed itself now, only in a better way. Then large sums were wasted in subsidies to Austria, to Prussia, and to other Powers; whilst at present all was spent among our own people, and in most instances with a reasonable prospect of return. He only mentioned this, because the present extraordinary prosperity was said to arise from an approximation to free trade, and that this was to be seen in the demand for labour. Any one, however, who had seen what took place during the last war would see the history of that prosperity, great as it was, in every part; and he took the liberty of admonishing their Lordships that they should not be quite sure they could scatter away the revenue, and trust to the continuance of that prosperity. This subject was not immediately connected with the measure then before the House; but those who were connected with the Government would do well to consider the suggestions he had made. It was clear that by the appointment of a Committee the subject of railway legislation would be best brought forward.

The DUKE of MONTROSE expressed an earnest hope that the course the Government intended to pursue would be made publicly known at an early day. In a few days hence the deposits were to be paid to the Accountant General. Unless this Committee was prepared to report before the payment of those deposits, they might be receiving them under very unsatisfactory circumstances. Suppose reports were made against certain lines the money for which had been deposited; why, the consequence would be that that money would be locked up, and that great inconvenience would ensue. He must admit that by reporting in a hurried manner it would be impossible in all cases to decide properly; but, on the other hand, it was very desirable that they should learn on what principle the Government proposed to act. It was said, in the other House, that a decision would be first arrived at, as to the railways most wanted by the country; but on what principle was the decision to be made? Some would say, that the districts most requiring lines of railway were those in which the population and manufactures were the greatest; whilst others would hold to the opinion that those districts should be first assisted which had no lines of railway in their neighbourhood. Although it was true, no doubt, that some lines had been got up, as the noble Lord who had spoken last had described, yet

there were other Bills which were *bonâ fide* —which were promoted and supported by the landowners of the districts through which they would pass, and which ought rather to be facilitated than impeded in their progress through Parliament. He trusted, therefore, that the Government would endeavour to secure an early report of the proceedings of this Committee.

EARL GREY would give his vote in favour of the Resolution for the appointment of the Special Committee, but wished to have it distinctly understood, that in so doing he did not desire to be interpreted as giving his sanction to the principle which appeared to be advocated by many who were anxious for the formation of the Committee—the irrational, he would say rather unconstitutional, principle, that Parliament had a right to interfere in the speculations of private individuals, or to attempt to prescribe limits to the amount of capital which the British public might, in the exercise of their discretion, think fit to expend on any particular project or projects. The more arguments he heard in sustainment of that principle, the more strongly was he inclined to doubt that it had any consideration either of sound policy or common sense to recommend it. It appeared to him that what Parliament in the discharge of its legitimate duties was called upon to do was this—first, to inquire and ascertain whether the parties who had applied for Bills to enable them to construct railways, were really in possession of the capital which they professed to have at their command; secondly, whether that capital was sufficient for the proper carrying out of the project they had in contemplation; thirdly, whether that project was calculated to be beneficial to the public interests; and lastly (and this indeed was a consideration of such importance that it ought, perhaps, to take precedence of all others), whether it was an undertaking which interfered unjustly, unfairly, or unnecessarily with private property. To these considerations the House ought to limit its inquiries; and if satisfactory answers were returned to all these questions, he for his part very much doubted whether, with respect to railways, or any other description of enterprises, Parliament would be justified in exercising any interference, with a view to dissuade or prevent the people of this country from laying out their money in the manner most agreeable to themselves. It should be left to the parties who subscribed the capital, and to them exclusively, to determine whether it was likely to prove advantageous to their interests, or the reverse, that they should withdraw their funds from other enterprises, and devote them to railways. This was a consideration for them, and for them alone; and Parliament, in his opinion, stepped beyond the province of its legitimate functions when it attempted to prescribe and define the exact amount of national capital which it was desirable should be withdrawn from other enterprises, to be expended upon railway projects. It was for the individuals who thought fit to embark in those enterprises to determine how far they were likely to prove profitable or otherwise. No doubt errors of judgment would occasionally be committed, but individuals were much more likely to form a just estimate of what would probably prove advantageous to them than that House could possibly be. They could better judge of matters affecting their own interest than that House could; and it should be borne in mind that what was for the interest of each individual, or of a vast proportion of individuals, was, in fact, for the interest of the public. If their Lordships should be of opinion that the rules and formularies which governed their House were not sufficiently stringent to prevent men who really had no capital at command from undertaking great public enterprises, and plunging the public in unavailing outlays, let them, with a view to the remedying of this evil, make their regulations and restrictions more severe—let them revise their Standing Orders, and take especial care not to give Parliamentary powers to those who were not in a condition to use them. But their Lordships would be entering upon an inquiry from which no beneficial results could possibly flow if they were to attempt, on a hasty and superficial examination (for such it must of necessity be) to determine which of the railway projects of this year should go forward, and which should be suspended. He thought it necessary to make these remarks, lest it should be supposed that in advocating the appointment of the Committee, he was recognising the justice of one of the principles which it appeared that Committee intended to proceed upon. Nothing could be more remote from his intention. One word now before he resumed his seat. He thought it was highly desirable that the Committee should take into its most serious consideration any measures that might be suggested with a view to those two objects—the les-

sening of the expense of Parliamentary proceedings in railway matters, and the diminution of the labours which devolved upon Committees of the House in consequence of the great pressure of business of this description. A suggestion had been thrown out last year, which he regretted had not been acted upon, with respect to the advisability of there being a joint Committee of both Houses to decide upon matters of this kind. It had sometimes occurred in cases of competing railway companies that one House had decided in favour of one line, and the other House of another line, and the consequence was that both fell to the ground altogether, after a vast deal of expense had been incurred by the promoters of each. He suggested whether it might not be better to make some arrangement with a view to the formation of a joint Committee for both Houses.

Lord ASHBURTON observed upon the difficulty of that House being able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion in the event of their instituting (as suggested by the noble Duke who had just sat down) an inquiry respecting the amount of *bonâ fide* capital in the possession of railway companies. How was the House to ascertain this? How was the capital of most of these railway schemes represented, except by an interminable list of high-sounding names, with certain figures written after each of them? In point of fact, it was with a long list of names, and not with real substantial capital, their Lordships had to deal.

Lord MONTEAGLE confessed he thought that their Lordships were engaged in an impracticable effort. It mattered not what number of Committees they might appoint—it mattered not what improvements they might introduce into their system—they could not effect the object they had in view as long as Railway Bills were dealt with by the House of Commons as though they were money bills, which could only originate with that House. It was a mistake to suppose that such measures could only originate with the Commons. They might just as well originate with their Lordships. Some change was absolutely necessary. Even supposing that the railway business were not to exceed this Session what it had been last year—and they all knew that it would be incomparably heavier—they had not the least chance in the present state of things of being able to discharge their duties with justice to the parties concerned, with satisfaction to the public at large, or with credit to themselves. The present system was a most vicious one, and he must say that, in his opinion, that House had not been treated as it should have been. Look at the period of the Session at which the railway bills were sent up to them last year from the other House. One hundred and eighteen railway bills were passed during the Session. During the months of February, March, April, and May, only eleven of those Bills came before their Lordships' House. Eighty-one were sent up from the Commons in the month of June, and twenty-five in the month of July—thus showing that the whole railway business of the country was thrown almost simultaneously upon the House of Lords at the period of their present difficulty and pressure. As long as railway bills were dealt with as though they were money bills, and that an impression prevailed that they must of necessity originate with the other House, so long their Lordships would be in a position of difficulty and perplexity, from which it would be impossible to extricate themselves. There was, at one time, an idea respecting Bills having reference to pecuniary penalties—an idea similar to that which now prevailed respecting railway bills, namely, that they were like money bills, and must originate with the Commons; but this notion had to be abandoned, and he hoped that it would be thus also with railway bills. With respect to the various projects now under the consideration of Parliament, it was of course impossible that they could all have precedence; but the peculiar position of Ireland just at present was such, that he was sure their Lordships would concur with him in thinking that it was only right that as much encouragement as was possible, under all circumstances, should be given to enterprises projected in that country. Most assuredly regard should be had to the present unhappy condition of Ireland.

Lord BROUGHAM: Oh, certainly. In coming to a decision give the cast of the balance that way, by all means.

Lord MONTEAGLE continued to observe that if the railway business were fairly divided between the two Houses of Parliament, reasonable progress could be given to the consideration of Irish measures, without at all interfering with the English business.

Lord REDESDALE thought that the question the House had to consider was one of possibility. There were no less than 600

new railway schemes to be decided upon, and he held it to be absolutely impossible that all these should be disposed of, under the present system, in the course of a single Session. The Committees last Session had acquitted themselves in a most creditable manner. Their decisions were upright and honest, and in no instance had the Members been biassed by feelings of private interest. However, the work was now so onerous as to be impossible of achievement.

Motion agreed to. Committee named. House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Thursday, January 29, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—1 · Factories.
Reported.—Public Works (Ireland).
PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Eastrington, and a great number of other places, against Alteration, and from Forres, Hereford, and Clitheroe, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.—From Ashton-under-Lyne, and a great number of other places, for limiting the Hours of Labour in Factories.—From Wexford, for Repeal of Colleges (Ireland) Act.—From Reading and Maxwelltown, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From Chairman of Dundalk Union, for Alteration of Mode of Rating, Poor Law (Ireland).—From Kilbarchan, for Remission of Sentence on Frost, Williams, and Jones.—From Marylebone, against Union of that Parish with other Parishes for the Maintenance of an Asylum for the Houseless Poor.—From John Williams (2 Petitions), suggesting the importance of forming Sub-archways for the Streets of London.—From Rev. William Augustus Morgan, for a Legislative Enactment, enabling Parish Clerks to enforce Payment for the performance of their Duties.

ADJOURNMENT.—THE MILITIA.

SIR R. PEEL said, that a notice had been given on his behalf, by his right hon. Friend the Secretary for the Home Department, which he believed would meet with the general concurrence of the House, and not subject any parties to inconvenience, either on account of public or private business. To-morrow being the 30th of January, he proposed that the House at its rising do adjourn until Monday next.

MR. T. DUNCOMBE wished to ask a question on a subject which had caused considerable excitement in various parts of the country—he alluded to the supposed intention which existed on the part of the Government to enrol and embody the militia. It was generally understood that the Government intended to enrol the militia under the Act now in existence. The right hon. Baronet was perhaps aware that militia clubs had been established, for the purpose of enabling persons to afford a passive resistance to the enrolment. Some individuals had scruples against serving, and others thought the circumstances of the country did not require the embodiment of the militia. If the Government did not intend to enrol that body, he trusted they would at once put an end to the excitement which prevailed. He wished to ask, in the first place, whether it was the intention of the Government to embody the militia during the present year; and if so, whether the enrolment would take place under the existing law, or under a new law? If it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill during the present year, he trusted it would be brought forward at an early period, and not be postponed until nearly all the Members had left town.

SIR J. GRAHAM replied that his right hon. Friend the Secretary at War intended to lay upon the Table a Bill for the propose of amending and consolidating the Militia Acts. The Bill was in course of preparation, and would be laid before the House at an early period.

Mr. ROSS was opposed to the adjournment of the House. He considered a reformed House of Commons ought not to keep such holidays as the one named, and for which the House was asked to adjourn. He thought that it was a reproach to those hon. men, Sir John Elliott, Pym, Hampden, and others, who had shed their blood in order to retain the chartered liberties of the country. They had sacrificed their lives in the defence of those liberties, and he thought that it would be foolish, with that fact before them, to keep that absurd fast. That was his opinion, and he felt bound to declare it. At least that was his impression, and he found it was published in the Papers of the House, and entered in the Notice-book, that to-morrow was to be observed as a fast in commemoration of the martyrdom of King Charles. There could be no doubt that such was the case, and if he only went out with one or two of his friends, he would divide the House on the subject.

SIR R. PEEL said, that he had yesterday endeavoured to put the matter in such form as would not offend the most sensitive mind, and to express the reasons of Her Majesty's Government for moving the adjournment. He had expressly stated that the reason of the adjournment of the House was really because there was no public business before them for that day, and because it would conduce very much to the public convenience. He conceived

that this constituted a sufficient reason for the adjournment.

MR. ROSS was satisfied with the reasons of the right hon. Baronet.

MR. BRIGHT thought the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department had not given a distinct answer to the question of the hon. Member for Finsbury. He understood from the answer of the right hon. Baronet that some new law was to be introduced; but the question put by his hon. Friend was, did the Government intend to call out the militia during the present year? A permanent law, perhaps, might be necessary; but the country wished to know whether the Government intended to call out the militia in the course of the year.

SIR J. GRAHAM said, from the manner in which the question had been put, the hon. Member did not appear to be aware of the existing state of the law. By the Act annually passed, power was given to Her Majesty in Council, in the event of certain contingencies, to call out the militia within a fortnight. At the present moment there was no intention of acting upon that power; but if the contingency should arise, it would be open to Her Majesty, by the advice of Her servants, to call out that body at a fortnight's notice. In answer to the other question, put by the hon. Member for Finsbury, he had already stated that it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to submit to the House a Bill for the purpose of amending and consolidating the Militia Acts; and his right hon. Friend the Secretary at War would, at an early day, give notice of the time of the introduction of the measure.

MR. WILLIAMS understood the right hon. Baronet's proposition was that the House should adjourn over to-morrow in consequence of there being no business, and not on account of its being the anniversary of the martyrdom of King Charles I. With that understanding, he (Mr. Williams) had no objection to the adjournment. But this he must say, that nothing could be more derogatory to the present generation than an adjournment on account of the martyrdom of that tyrant ["Oh!"]. Yes, he repeated, of that tyrant, whose head was laid upon the scaffold in consequence of his superseding the authority of the House of Commons. If he had not violated the Constitution of the country by an attempt to supersede the authority of the House of Commons, in levying taxes upon the people without the authority of Parliament, that event never would have occurred. The character of that Parliament who resisted the tyrant ought to be respected, rather than the fate of that man. However, as the adjournment was not moved on the ground to which he had alluded, he would make no objection to the adjournment.

LORD J. MANNERS said, whatever the understanding of the hon. Member for Coventry might be, it was not his (Lord J. Manners') wish to enter into any discussion of the topic suggested by him; but he must protest most distinctly that he utterly and entirely dissented from every word which had fallen from the hon. Member; and in approving of the adjournment of the House, he did not coincide in the reasons assigned by the hon. Member.

BUENOS AYRES AND MONTE VIDEO.

LORD J. RUSSELL wished to put a question to the right hon. Gentleman, relative to the transactions which had recently occurred at the River Plate. He wished to know whether the right hon. Baronet was prepared to lay on the Table such documents as would elucidate the transactions to which he alluded?

SIR R. PEEL said, he had not the slightest objection to lay upon the Table of the House those documents which would explain the grounds upon which Her Majesty's Government had acted in concert with France—namely, the instructions which had been given to Mr. Ouseley. He had rather not, at present, produce the proposition made by General Rosas, which, although not accepted, might lay the foundation for an adjustment of the matters in difference. So long as there was any chance of such adjustment, he thought it would be better not to lay on the Table any proof of the atrocities which had been committed during the lamentable struggle which had taken place. But he had no objection to lay before the House the Convention with France, and the instructions given to Mr. Ouseley, detailing the grounds on which this country, after a long delay, most reluctantly interfered.

LORD J. RUSSELL had no wish to ask for the Papers showing the atrocities which had been committed, but he thought it would be necessary, for the information of the House, to produce, not only the instructions given, which were the result of previous negociations, but what were the demands which led to hostilities.

SIR R. PEEL said, the nature of the demands would be fully understood from the instructions, which would show the proposals made by the Government on the part of this country and France.

STANDING ORDERS—RAILWAY DEPOSITS.

MR. HASTIE said, he rose to complain, on behalf of the bankers, merchants, and traders of this country, against the Standing Orders of that House. By Standing Order, No. 39, it was rendered necessary that deposits on account of Railway Bills should be paid to the Accountant General of the Court of Chancery. He (Mr. Hastie) did not complain of the amount 10 per cent., but of the mode of payment, and the delay occurring between the Accountant General and the Bank of England. When the money had passed into the hand of the Accountant General, a week must elapse before the Bank could use the deposits. It was estimated that this year the deposits would amount to eight or ten millions, which amount must all be paid within two weeks of the sitting of Parliament. Any one who had the least acquaintance with the currency of the country must know that to lock up so large a sum must create great alarm and difficulty. What he complained of was the delay between the Court of Chancery and the Bank of England. The Bank of England, if the money were paid directly into their account, would feel itself at liberty to use the deposits; discounts would thus go on as usual, and the great inconvenience to the mercantile world of which he complained would be avoided. He was aware that many representations had been made to the Government on this subject, and he blamed them not for the caution with which they had acted; but while they were anxious to discourage mere speculation, they should take care that their caution did not affect others than those against whom it was directed, and limit the commercial transactions of those who had no connection, and were wholly unacquainted, with those railway speculations. It was well known to all commercial men that nearly the whole of the mercantile transactions of this country were carried on by means of bills of exchange. All the goods sent from hence to South America, China, and the West India Islands, were paid for by bills; the remittances were wholly in bills, which could immediately be discounted in London at the current rate of discount, and thus the inconvenience which would be occasioned by the locking up of the money until the bills became due was prevented, and the operations of commerce facilitated. But the course that had been adopted in regard to these deposits had stopped this accommodation, and during the last three days it had been found impossible almost to obtain discount in the City. The extent of the inconvenience might be judged of by the fact, that the bills connected with the South American, West Indian, and China traders, alone discounted in the year, averaged about 150,000,000*l*. If these railway deposits were removed from the account of the Accountant General of the Court of Chancery, and placed to that of the Bank of England, the Bank, knowing the requirements of the mercantile community would still give that accommodation which it had been usual for the last fifty years to afford. If he thought such a relaxation would in any way tend to encourage undue speculation in railway schemes, he would be the last person to ask for it; but he did not believe it would have any such effect, while to continue the present arrangement, would embarrass the mercantile community, which had nothing to do with such speculations, and put a stop to commercial operations. He had given a notice upon this subject on a previous evening, but had been informed by the Speaker, that as the restriction he complained of was imposed by an Act of Parliament, such notice would be ineffectual for his object. Under these circumstances, he was anxious to press the matter on the attention of the Government, in the hope that they would propose some alteration of the law, by which the evil would be prevented.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER could assure the hon. Member who had just sat down, that he deplored as much as the hon. Member the effect which undue speculation had had upon the innocent individuals who had embarked in them. But the embarrassment alluded to was one of the misfortunes incident not only to railway speculations, but applied to all those other mercantile speculations which had occurred at a time when railway speculation could not have been among the causes of such embarrassment. He doubted, however, whether the hon. Member had taken a correct view of the evil, or had suggested that which would afford any remedy. The hon. Gentleman said that the House, by a Standing Order, required parties to a railway to deposit a certain amount of the sum

subscribed. By an Act passed in the beginning of the reign of Her Majesty, it was enacted, that whenever a deposit was required to be made by either House of Parliament, it should be paid into the Bank of England, and placed to the credit of the Accountant General of the Court of Chancery. The money, therefore, that was now paid on account of the deposits required, was paid into the Bank of England, and, in fact, was there transferred from the account of bankers who had an account with the Bank, to the account of another individual, who also had an account with the Bank—viz., the Accountant General. The deposits were, therefore, as much available for commercial purposes, when standing in the name of one individual, as if they had stood in the name of several individuals, with this advantage, that when they stood in the name of the Accountant General they could not be drawn out of the Bank without certain preliminaries in the Court of Chancery, which gave to the Bank an opportunity of knowing the particular time when the demand would be made upon them. The hon. Member said that it would be of material benefit if these deposits were placed to the account of other parties in the Bank of England, and that he would recommend an alteration of the Act in this point. He should be glad to hear when the hon. Gentleman brought forward his Motion, what benefit he proposed to derive from the deposits standing in the name of any other party than the Accountant General? He did not see how that could affect the power of the Bank in making advances on bills in the ordinary manner, as their doing so did not depend on the number of parties in whose name deposits were placed, but on the amount of deposits in their possession. The hon. Gentleman would, therefore, see that what he proposed would not remedy the evil, and that the payments to the Accountant General did not call for the absorption of the circulation which he complained of.

MR. HASTIE said, that the right hon. Gentleman was quite correct in saying that the money was transferred from one account in the Bank to that of the Accountant General. His complaint was that when so transferred it was locked up from general use.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, that the hon. Gentleman was altogether in error. If the money were placed to the credit of any ordinary account with the Bank of England, the person who had that account might draw on the Bank at an hour's notice. But when placed to the credit of the Accountant General, it would require the party wishing to draw to undergo a delay of about ten days, as notice to that effect was rendered necessary.

Mr. P. M. STEWART said, the mercantile community in general must feel obliged to his hon. Friend (Mr. Hastie) for bringing the matter forward; and as the mischief was at work, whether it rested on the authority of an Act of Parliament, or on an Order of that House, he hoped he would not delay in pressing it upon the attention of the House. He was quite sure that any Bank Director present would admit that, so far as commercial accommodation was concerned, the distinction drawn by his hon. Friend the Member for Paisley was perfectly correct. Supposing the money to be placed in the Bank in the names of five of the provisional committee, he admitted that they had the same power over it as a private individual would have, were it placed in his name; but if it was placed there under the authority of the Speaker's warrant, it would remain in the Bank, and could only be drawn by parties possessing certain official documents passing from the Speaker. The parties lodging it had no power to draw it, and it became available to the Bank of England for commercial purposes. But in the case of deposits paid into the credit of the Accountant General, there was no power to dislodge them for such purposes. The purpose of the law that had been made on that subject was to secure the public from injury, and that object would be amply effected by the lodgment of the money in the Bank of England, under authority from the proper quarter. No practical man or Bank of England director would contradict him when he said, that if the money were placed in the Bank of England under restraint, it would not be available for commercial purposes. Whereas if it were paid in, as he had said, under the authority of the Speaker's Order, it would be available to-morrow. During the last few days it had been impossible to get discounts; and what he contended was, that this money was so abstracted from circulation, and the mercantile transactions of the country brought to a stand-still, for no good purpose whatever. Six or seven millions were thus lodged as deposits, occasioning the withdrawal of about one-fifth or one-

sixth of the whole circulation of the country. It would be so for a certain time at least. He trusted that the Government would turn their attention to the subject. If any good reason could be shown for continuing the law, let it remain; but his belief was, that it was a defect in the law to require these deposits to be placed in the hands of the Accountant General; and if that law were not altered it would inflict great injury on the commercial interests of the country.

Mr. GISBORNE was anxious that the interests of depositors—the shareholders in these railways—should be considered. The hon. Gentleman who had just spoken proposed that the money should be paid into the Bank, under the Speaker's warrant, and only taken out by the authority of the Speaker's warrant; that was in effect to say, that the money should remain in the Bank — unavailable to the depositors — until either the Bill passed or was thrown out. This would be most unjust, as the Bank allowed no interests on such deposits.

Mr. HUDSON would offer a practical suggestion to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which he was persuaded would obviate the difficulty complained of. If the companies seeking to obtain the consent of Parliament to Railway Bills, were, in place of money, to be allowed to deposit Exchequer bills, or stock, the difficulty would be met. By requiring the deposits to be made in money, the promoters of railway schemes were prevented from investing their money in good securities; but were they allowed, as they ought to be, to make the deposits in securities, the only object being that security should be taken for the due execution of the works undertaken—then the deposit of 10,000*l.* or 20,000*l.* of Exchequer bills or consols would be as good as a deposit of bank notes to an equal amount, and the inconvenience complained of be altogether avoided. The House of Commons would get the security, if required—the railway companies would be receiving interest on their money, the circulation would not be interfered with, and all parties would be benefited: whether the deposits in that case were paid to the account of the Bank of England, or the Accountant General, would not matter; and he agreed with the right hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to the advantage of the notice in the latter case—in either case the evil would be remedied. He was satisfied if his suggestion were adopted, it would remove the difficulty, and advantage all parties.

Mr. RICARDO said, the observations of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Sunderland had changed the nature of the discussion. This was not a question of convenience to the railway companies; but as regarded the public whether the circulation of the country should be diminished. It mattered little whether the deposits were paid to the credit of one name or another, and still less did it matter by whom the money was invested; neither did it appear to him—though large payments of money to one particular purpose must always occasion disarrangement to the currency to some extent—that if the bankers themselves had confined their operations to legitimate accommodation, and not attempted to commit certain imprudencies of which many of them had been guilty—if they had acted with common prudence, no difficulty would have arisen. In regard to what had been said by the hon. Gentleman who spoke last, he thought much of the inconvenience might be avoided, if at the period of registration the time were fixed for the repayment of the deposit: say that the money should remain there four months after the date of registration. The Bank would thus know, as soon as the money came into their hands, when they would have to repay it, and might deal with it with certainty.

Mr. MUNTZ concurred that it mattered not by whom the money was paid. He thought that it was very strange that the Government should refuse to receive their own securities as a payment into the public Treasury, especially when they were only held as a trustee fund; and he conceived that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was throwing something like disgrace on the credit of those securities. The proposal of the hon. Member for Sunderland was a proper one, and if he had not made it, he would.

Sir R. PEEL hoped the House would not lightly interfere in this matter. It was impossible to place any check upon extravagant speculation in railways, without subjecting the public to some inconvenience. One of the securities Parliament had thought fit to require for the purpose of preventing, as far as possible, delusive speculations in railways, was, that before the petition for the Bill should be presented, a certain deposit upon the capital to be subscribed should be made. Formerly that deposit was five per cent.; but that being thought

too small, the House, with the view of discouraging unsound speculations, only last year determined that it should be increased to 10 per cent., and at the same time required that the amount to be paid into the hands of the Accountant General should be in money. He must say that looking at the many notices of railway speculations that were given in July last, he thought those who dealt in money had had full notice of the probable pressure that would ensue; and it was quite open for them to refuse discount on long bills, and to take the necessary precautions against that pressure. It would be unwise for Parliament lightly to interfere, now that the difficulty was beginning to be felt, and to relax those checks which it had imposed to discourage improper and unwise speculations. Above all, it would be unwise for Parliament to make alterations in the rules it had laid down, which would not give the relief required—as, for instance, the making of the Bank of England the party to whose account the deposits should be paid instead of the Accountant General. With regard to the subject of discounts, by the Bank of England, the hon. Gentleman said he hoped the attention of the Government would be called to it. He assured him that both his hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and himself, had had their attention called to it, and had had repeated interviews with the highest authorities in reference to it; and the hon. Gentleman would find that many of the most important authorities in the monetary world deprecated Parliamentary interference, with the view to relax the checks that now existed. As to whether or not it might be proper to permit deposits to be made in Exchequer bills and stock, he would not now enter into that question. It was a new proposal, which he had not yet considered; but he hoped they would consider whether any advantage or relief would result to those who required the accommodation of discount for the purpose of carrying on their mercantile operations, that the money should be lodged to the credit of the Bank of England, instead of to the account of the Accountant General. His belief was that the Bank could use the money with greater security now than if the proposed change were made. But as to saying, as the hon. Gentleman who last spoke suggested, that there should be a period of time, as three or four months, elapse before the money deposited should be returned, that would be most unjust to the promoters of these speculations. They might fail before the Standing Orders' Committee, or at an early period of the proceedings, and it would be most unjust to refuse to return their money at the earliest possible moment after the decision of the House against them was known. Such an arrangement, therefore, he considered, would be most unfair.

MR. P. M. STEWART rose to explain. He thought the interval between the depositing and the release of the money could be determined by the fate of the Bill when certified by the proper authority.

SIR R. PEEL objected, on the ground that the fate of a Bill might not be decided for perhaps two or three months.

MR. STEWART: Why, the Standing Orders are to decide it.

MR. F. T. BARING considered it would be hard to lock up money for an indefinite time, without interest, until the fate of the Bill might be known. He confessed—but he might be mistaken—that he could not understand what disadvantages could arise from the deposit of Exchequer bills instead of money. The object of the deposit was, that the Government and the public might have a security that the undertaking for which it was proposed to obtain an Act of Parliament was of a *bonâ fide* nature. He hoped the House would well consider the subject.

The Question of Adjournment agreed to.

THE TEN HOURS' FACTORY BILL.

LORD ASHLEY presented petitions from various places in Scotland in favour of a measure for limiting the hours of labour of young persons in factories to ten hours.

SIR G. STRICKLAND and one or two other hon. Members presented petitions to the same effect.

LORD ASHLEY, on rising to move for leave to bring in a Bill to effect this object, said: Sir, it has so often been my duty to solicit the indulgence of the House, that I may seem to be acting merely in conformity with ceremonial when I prefer my earnest entreaty for its patient attention on this occasion; but at no time have I felt it more necessary to make this request. I am about to revive the discussion of a proposition oftentimes propounded in this House, and as often rejected; one upon which I can offer no novel arguments, and which moreover was submitted to the House at a period not very distant, and was then determined and decided. I think, however, that I can assign good reasons for the

course I am about to take. In the first place, I must assert very respectfully, though very positively, that the decision was not a decision of the House; it was the decision of the Minister. This House has twice affirmed my proposition; and we all know in what way the reversal of that judgment was obtained. Next I observe, that a very large majority of those Gentlemen who from their position and knowledge must be best acquainted with the feelings of the manufacturing and commercial districts, indeed no less than thirty-three of forty-two of the Representatives of those districts, supported my proposition, and voted for the Ten Hours' Bill through all its divisions; and I do expect a similar exhibition of local opinion on the present occasion. Moreover, I must assert the continued and undiminished desire of the workpeople for this measure—a desire that, instead of abating, seems, as far as I can see, to gather strength and resolution under every defeat. Nearly two years have elapsed since I last submitted this question to the House; and during the interval events have occurred of such a character as will illustrate in the most forcible manner the truth and the safety of the principles I have endeavoured to maintain; I have also obtained from foreign countries most important information, justifying, as I think, the strongest assertions and strongest arguments I have ever been able to adduce in this House. It will be my endeavour to abstain from wearying the House by the production of evidence which has oftentimes been brought before it in various reports and debates. I believe it will be some disadvantage to my argument, if I abstain from refreshing the memory of hon. Members with a detail of all that evidence which shows the great pressure upon the physical condition of the workers; but I will forego the advantage, because the question now is narrowed to a single proposition—can this be done without injury to the manufacturer, and without a serious diminution of the wages of labour? For I have met with no one, wherever I have been, who will deny the great moral and physical benefits to be derived, if this limitation were assigned to the hours of work. The first matter to which I shall call the attention of the House is a series of experiments instituted in the manufacturing districts by various parties in respect of the reduction of the hours of labour. Mr. Gardner, a gentleman who has very large mills in Manchester and Preston, instituted those experiments; and he was good enough, in the course of last year, after his experiments had run through twelve months, to send up his son and his principal agent to London, to give me an account of his operations. I put to them several questions, the answers to which were committed to writing; and they are so exceedingly important that I must solicit the indulgence of the House while I read them: they completely prove that the hours of labour may be reduced, not only without loss, but with actual benefit both to the master and operative. The first question I put to them was with respect to the comparative produce of labour where the limitation was eleven hours instead of twelve. The reply was this—

"The produce of eleven hours at Mr. Gardner's mills was not reduced at all."

He added an observation—

"I could not understand how it was that our men could turn off as much work (and some a little more) in eleven hours as ever they did in twelve. I said to one of them, 'John, will you tell me how it is that you can do more work in eleven hours than you did in twelve?' 'Why,' said he, 'we can lay to in eleven hours a day better than we could when we worked twelve, because we get more rest at night, and we are in better spirits all the day through, and, besides, the afternoons are not so long.' He could spin, he said, ten years longer, if Mr. Gardner would keep on eleven hours."

I could give you more such cases. The second question I put to them was, was the quality of the produce for eleven hours better or worse than that from twelve? To this I received the following answer:—

"The work is decidedly better since the change to eleven hours; when we worked twelve hours I had very often to find fault with the spinners for not making their cops hard enough. Most of our spinners are generally spinning pin cops, which have to be wove wet, and if they are not made very hard they will fly off in the weaving, and they are nothing but waste. I can say that since the change the work is decidedly better. At the present speed at which the machinery is generally run it is very hard work for the spinners to keep up and make such work as will give satisfaction, particularly where they spin coarse numbers and work twelve hours in the day."

The next question I put was—

"Were the wages reduced or raised or kept at the same level in eleven hours as compared to twelve hours?"

The answer was to the effect that the wages were the same. And the gentleman then gives a statement showing the average rate of wages paid for a certain number of weeks, when they worked twelve hours, and eleven hours; and by this it appears

that in fact there was a slight increase of wages under the eleven hour system as compared with the twelve. The next question I put was—

"What were the effects of the change of system upon the health of the workers?"

To this it was answered, that—

"The hands undoubtedly have better health since the change to eleven hours, and I could give you several cases of both weavers and spinners; I will give but one. Joseph Parker, a very sober industrious man, and a very good spinner, having been in the employ of Mr. Gardner for seventeen years, was so often off his work in the winter time, when we worked until half-past seven, that he was obliged to conclude that he could not stand spinning any longer . . . . Since the change to eleven hours he has done more work than ever he did before, and has only been off work once through sickness, which will be very soon two years."

The next point to which I turned my inquiries was, whether the means of improvement (if any) which the diminution of daily labour gave to both sexes for the comfort and duties of domestic life had been turned by the parties concerned to any advantage in their social and moral condition? To this I received the following reply:—

"Whenever mills worked 12 hours, the number that attended night school were 27; and a few months after the change they increased to 96. The female part of our hands turn their leisure time more to the needle, and those that are married to their domestic concerns. I believe there is a better taste for reading among the workpeople. Mr. Gardner intimated that, as he was a subscriber to the Bible Society, he wished his hands to have bibles and testaments at the society's prices; and the first week I sold myself 136 books, and every week's end I sell a few."

On asking as to the feeling produced between employers and employed under the operation of this system, I received the following information:—

"I can confidently say, that there is not a gentleman in all Lancashire that stands so high in the estimation, not only of his own workpeople, but of all the operatives. I will conclude by saying, first, that the present speed at which machinery is generally run, it is impossible for the hands to keep up, when they work 12 hours a day. Secondly, when the speed and time they work and the atmosphere they breathe is taken into consideration, no one will wonder at the death-like appearance of the factory workers; and if the hours of labour were reduced, it would be like giving them so much more life."

But Mr. Gardner himself published a letter describing the results of his experiments; he says—

"I am quite satisfied that both as much yarn and power-loom cloth may be produced at quite as low a cost in 11 as in 12 hours a day. . . . All the arguments I have heard in favour of long time appear based on an arithmetical question; if 11 produce so much, what will 12, 13, or even 15 hours produce? This is correct so far as the steam-engine is concerned; whatever it will produce in 11 hours, it will produce double the quantity in 22; but try this on the animal—horse—and you will soon find he cannot compete with the engine, as he requires time both to rest and feed."—"It is, I believe, a fact, not to be questioned, that there is more bad work made the last one or two hours, than the whole of the first nine or ten hours."

I saw this gentleman in October last, and he still maintains all the opinions he has expressed heretofore, as to the result of the limitation-of-time system. But there are various other places where this system is in operation, and with similar advantageous consequences. The Messrs. Horrocks and Jackson, of Preston, have made similar experiments, and with equal success. These gentlemen have been working on the eleven-hours system since May last. Mr. Knowles, of Bolton, a very considerable spinner, commenced the reduction in April last.

"I saw Mr. Knowles," says the writer of a letter, "three weeks since, and he said so satisfied was he with the change, that he never intended to work his mill any longer than 11 hours per day. He had been connected with the working of factories more than 40 years, and he always thought that the hours in factories were far too long. I asked him respecting the work turned off in 11 hours compared with 12 hours. He said, when he made the change, he never expressed any wish that his hands would turn off as much work in 11 hours as in 12; but some of the spinners did as much work in 11 hours as ever they did in 12; others did a little less, but not in proportion to the diminution of time. The difference was so little, that he had no hesitation in saying, that he did not lose one penny in the year by the change."

The following is an extract of a letter from a large power-loom weaver in Scotland, which he communicated to me, knowing the part I have always taken with regard to this question; he writes to me thus:—

"Six months ago we came to the resolution of employing our workpeople only 65 hours a week instead of 69. It has been entirely successful; we have had no reason to regret the change, neither have our workpeople. We make no alteration in the wages, and there never was more earned in our works than at present by those employed at work paid by the piece. We have it in contemplation now to reduce our time to 60 hours. The more I have considered the matter, the more convinced have I become, that for all parties a Ten Hours Bill would be advantageous."

A communication received from a worsted mill, near Bradford, informs me—

"The proprietor has lately been trying the ten hours' principle with his weavers, and with profit and advantage."

From a woollen mill near Leeds, I have received the following:—

"The limitation of the hours of labour has been of the most incalculable benefit to the people in that neighbourhood, not only in relieving physical suffering, but in distributing wages over a longer period during the year."

From the West Riding of Yorkshire, a worsted manufacturer writes as follows:—

"I have been trying the ten hours' principle; I get nearly as much work as ——— gets, who works a longer time for the same wages. ——— used to work 16 hours a day; he declares that he gets more work and better work than ever he did in 16."

These were the experiments made in various parts of England, and in every single instance you have found that the amount of produce has not fallen off, neither have the wages of the operatives been diminished; and the general facts show a great moral and social improvement in the condition of the people. I was anxious also to ascertain what was the result of this system in Prussia, where, in 1839, the King passed a decree limiting the hours of labour to children under 16 years of age in factories to 10 hours, and where the system has been in full operation ever since. In reply to various questions of mine, I received the following answers from Elberfeld:—

"There has been no diminution of work in consequence of the limitation of the time for children at 16 and under to 10 hours a day."—"The salutary influence of the law on the physical as well as moral condition of the labouring classes is evident."—"There is no diminution of the wages perceptible in consequence of the limitation of the hours of labour."—"At first there was undoubtedly a very strong feeling against the law in a considerable body of the millowners; but this has literally disappeared."

With respect to the observance of the law, on making inquiry of the Director of the Home Department, he says—

"Not a single remonstrance has been addressed by any one of the millowners to the Government or the provincial states, much less has any resistance taken place."

He further says—

"There were some malcontents. They were afraid of foreign competition; but they seem soon to have been satisfied that this fear was imaginary, the produce of the work not having diminished."

The example we have set with respect to the regulation of labour in factories has been followed by various foreign countries. It has been followed by France, and the French Government has passed a law as nearly as possible a transcript of our own. Our example has forced the Government of Prussia into an enactment which provides for the moral and physical improvement of the operatives of that country; and you may depend upon it that if we persevere in the course on which we have entered, we shall compel foreign countries to adopt a similar policy. Let me just point out to the House what are the general results of our factory regulations on the moral, physical, and financial condition of our operatives. I request the particular attention of the House to this subject, for I believe that the results in question offer a complete contradiction to all the opinions put forward in the year 1833, against the measure which I introduced at that period. Let the House see what were the predictions then made, as compared with the actual results of our legislation. I recollect that in the year 1833, when I first brought forward a Bill for a limitation of the hours of labour, there were four predictions, which were constantly ringing in our ears, which were repeated at every meeting, and were transcribed into every journal adverse to the measure. The first of these predictions was, that the great cotton trade would be destroyed by any limitation of the hours of labour; the second was, that the wages of the protected parties would be diminished; the third was, that the wages of children would be reduced to a mere fraction; and the fourth was, that the children would be dismissed, and that great suffering would universally ensue. Now, let the House permit me to state the actual results, as compared with those predictions. It has been said, in the first place, that our great cotton trade would be destroyed by any diminution of the hours of labour. In answer to that prediction, I need only refer to the state of our cotton trade in the years 1835 and 1836, and during the last three years; and it is not, I believe, necessary that I should dwell any further upon that part of the question. But it was predicted, in the second place, that the wages of the protected parties would be diminished. Now, there were two classes who were at that time protected by our legislation. There were, first, persons under the age of thirteen, who were called "children;" and there were, secondly, persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, who were called "young persons." The law enacted that young persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen should not be exposed to a longer duration of work than twelve hours in the day. Now, before the year 1833, the average wages of those young persons were 5*s.* 4*d.* per week, while their average wages since that period have been 6*s.* 11*d.* per

week; thus showing an increase of 30 per cent. in the averages drawn from the four great towns of Manchester, Bolton, Preston, and Oldham. Let us next pass to the third prediction, that the wages of children would be reduced to a mere fraction. The average wages of children under thirteen years of age, for twelve or more than twelve hours labour a day, were, before 1833, 3*s.* 1*d.* per week; and since 1833, their average wages for six hours labour a day have been 2*s.* 2*d.* per week. But although there has been in that case an apparent abatement of wages, the families have not, in many instances, suffered in consequence; because, by that admirable provision restricting the labour of children to six hours a day, a greater demand has been created for the labour of those children, and many families which could formerly obtain employment for one child only, now find employment for two children; so that the aggregate wages are at present frequently greater than the wages received under the old system. Let us look at the fourth prediction, which was that the children would be dismissed, and that much physical suffering would ensue. It is very difficult to obtain statistical returns with respect to children under thirteen years of age employed before the year 1833. But this we know—that very few of them indeed were receiving any education at all; whereas, I have grounds for asserting that there are now 30,000 children, under thirteen years of age, working six hours a day, and receiving education during three hours, that education being in many instances of a very excellent description, and having been much improved during the last two or three years. I have also been informed that in the towns of Manchester, Bolton, and Preston, the increase of children at school has been, since the year 1833, as eight to one, exclusive of those who attend night schools; while the increase of those above thirteen years (who labour twelve hours a day), in places for teaching persons of that age, has been little or none. Let me add the remarks of the Committee of Operative Spinners upon that point—remarks which ought to carry with them great weight, for they had been extremely opposed to the clause which limited the labour of children to half time. They have written to me as follows:—

"We also instituted an inquiry into the moral and physical condition of piecers and young persons now, as compared with the same class in 1833, and from every quarter we learn that it is much improved; and since the Bill of 1833, which restricted the hours of labour to eight in the day, and that of 1844 to six in the day, with enactments for education, their physical and moral condition has been improved to such an extent that they do not appear to be the same race of beings. We have recently conversed with a large number of the operatives, and those men especially who have devoted a large portion of their time and much of their means to the promotion of this question, and they all declare that the benefits which have arisen to themselves and their children are more than sufficient to repay them for their time and sacrifices, and that sooner than go back to their old system they would part with the last shilling they have in the world in defence of the restrictive system of factory labour."

I have felt great satisfaction in reading that statement, for it not only justifies my past conduct, but gives me great assurance of future success in my efforts upon this subject. I hope I am not assuming too much for our efforts, when I ascribe to them the collateral advantage of the half-holiday system for warehousemen in Manchester, and other great towns, at one time so energetically opposed, but now as warmly approved by the employers. I have reason to know that the system has been attended with the most beneficial results; and I believe that the hon. Member for Durham will bear me out in that statement. Among all the alterations that have been effected since the year 1833, I am sorry to perceive that nothing has been done for the benefit of young persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. Those young persons are exposed under the existing law to twelve hours' actual labour per day; now a very large portion of them are females, and I think I may appeal to the House to say, whether it is not cruel to take a young female on the very day on which she has passed the age of thirteen, at the most tender period of her life, and to demand of her precisely the same work in duration, and frequently the same in intensity, which is demanded from ripe and vigorous manhood? Observe the results to which this practice must lead. I believe every one will admit that it is a matter of vital importance to the peace and welfare of society, and to the comfort and well-being of the working classes, that females should be brought up with such a knowledge of domestic arts and household concerns as may enable them efficiently to discharge the various duties of wives and mothers. But how can it be possible that young women, whose labour has been so heavy and so prolonged, that they are in many cases unable to cook their own suppers, or even to eat the suppers prepared for them—how is it possible

that they should learn the details of domestic life which constitute the comfort of the working man's home, and contribute so powerfully to the morality of the rising generation, because women must have, and ought to have, almost undivided influence on children during the earliest and most impressible years of their existence? I am not expressing my own opinions merely upon that point, because the Commissioners appointed in the year 1840 to inquire into the employment of young persons, went so far as to state, that it was the universal opinion of clergymen, medical men, teachers, and others, that the condition of the women was one great and universally prevailing cause of the distress among the working classes. I will now read to the House the result of an experiment made by a friend of mine, who had set up in the neighbourhood of several large factories a night school, for the purpose of affording education to the young people employed in those factories. That gentleman writes to me as follows :—

"In October, the schoolmaster opened two evening classes, one for the young men, and the other for the young women, employed during the day in the mills of ——. Each class met twice in the week, on alternate evenings, and between the hours of eight and nine. The eagerness to receive instruction was so great that forty young men, and thirty-eight young women entered immediately . . . Some of the pupils, after leaving the mills at eight in the evening, came the distance of nearly two miles to the classes. But so great was the fatigue they had undergone during the day, that although they evinced an earnest desire to be instructed, it was soon found that their physical powers were too much exhausted by the day's work to enable them to give proper attention to the teachers, and as many as four and five together were observed to have fallen asleep. Within the space of a few months, the classes were deserted by all but five young men. They were accustomed to excuse their want of attention to the teachers, by saying that they were up at five o'clock in the morning, and that after leaving the classes they had to take their suppers; and, consequently, did not get to bed till eleven, and that owing to the long hours and short nights' rest, they found it impossible to keep awake during the evening lessons."

I have often heard it said, that there is a factory establishment in another country which completely proves that twelve hours' labour a day are quite consistent with health, comfort, happiness, and moral and intellectual improvement; and when discussing this subject, we have always been referred to the case of Lowell, in the United States. Now, I believe that this case of Lowell fully establishes everything that I have urged upon this matter. Let us begin by assuming—for it is only nominally the case—that the hours of labour are the same in both countries—that is to say, twelve hours a day. You must still observe, at the very outset, that there is one great and leading distinction. Dr. Bartlett, an eminent physician of the United States, wrote a book, entitled, "A Vindication of Lowell," and in that book he states—

"By a statute of the commonwealth it is provided that no person under the age of 15 years shall be suffered to work more than nine months of any year in a manufacturing establishment, the remaining three months to be passed at school."

Dr. Bartlett further avers, that—

"The law is enforced with unflinching strictness, so that even in times of scarcity of hands no plea that he ever heard of was admitted for the wresting of the law from its important design."

There is another very great and leading distinction. What is the case in the English factory? In the English factory, children having reached the age of 13 years, are admitted to the full period of 12 hours' labour, and for the whole year. What is the period at which the young people at Lowell begin to work? The average age is very much higher than in England. Out of nearly 2,000 girls employed there, the average age was 23 years. I will take two or three mills. In one mill, 657 young women are employed; what is their average age? Twenty-two years and a quarter; and the average time during which they have been at work in the mill is three years and three quarters; and, consequently, at the period of their entry they were about 19 years of age. In English factories they begin to work 12 hours a day at 13 years of age. I will take the instance of another mill, in which there are 203 young women, whose average time of employment is four years and a quarter. They also were about 19 years of age when they began work. I will just quote now from a most interesting and authentic work, published at the end of last year, called "Lowell as it was, and as it is," published by an American clergyman, the Rev. Henry Mills, who wrote the work at the solicitation of the great proprietor of Lowell, who furnished him with the necessary statistics for the purpose. Observe another great and leading distinction between our factory people and those at Lowell; observe whence they come, and how long they remain in the mills. What does the Rev. Mr. Mills say? He says—

"We have no permanent factory population.

This is the wide gulf which separates English manufacturing towns from Lowell; only a very few of our operatives have their homes in this city; the most of them come from the distant interior of the country."

They are mostly, says Dr. Scoresby, the daughters of the provincial farmers. Mr. Mills goes on to say—

"To the general fact here noticed should be added, that the female operatives in Lowell do not work, on an average, more than four and a half years in the factories; they then return to their homes, and their places are taken by others. Here then (he says) we have two important elements of distinction between English and American operatives. The former are resident operatives, and are so for life, and constitute a permanent dependent factory caste—the latter come from distant homes, to which in a few years they return. The English visitor to Lowell, when he finds it so hard to understand why American operatives are so superior to those of Leeds and Manchester, will do well to remember what a different class of females we have to begin with—girls well educated in virtuous rural homes."

Now, let us look at the statistical returns respecting female operatives. On inquiry it has been found that—

"Of the 6320 female operatives in Lowell, 527 have been teachers in common schools."

Again, it is to be observed—and this is another very leading distinction between the two countries—that with us "there are more married women," says Dr. Scoresby, "than at Lowell." Just let me point out that even at Lowell there is the same predominance of females employed in mill labour, an evil of which we have complained so often in this country, and which I have so often heard ascribed to the operation of the Corn Laws. The total population of Lowell is 30,000, of which the operatives number about 10,000, of which 2915 are males, and 6320 females. So, you observe, even in that country, there is the same predominance of female over male labour; and it must be ascribed to some other cause than to those commercial restrictions that are said to be the cause of so much mischief with us. Well, but now observe again, that notwithstanding all these flattering statements as to the condition of Lowell, notwithstanding that there is in America complete freedom from all commercial restrictions, no limitation, nothing which can prevent the free action of the manufacturer in any way he may think proper—yet in Lowell, with all these advantages, you may hear the language of complaint; you may hear the same language which you hear in this country; you will hear stated by operatives, by word of mouth as well as by petition, the same complaints of overtoil, of premature decay, of sinking health, and an early grave. Look at these documents. I quote now from a public document, proceeding from the commonwealth of Massachusetts' House of Representatives:—

"Special Committee report that four petitions, signed by 2139 persons, of which 1151 are from Lowell, mostly females, have been presented, praying the Legislature 'to pass a law providing that ten hours shall constitute a day's work.' The petitioners declare that they are confined from thirteen to fourteen hours per day in unhealthy apartments, and are thereby hastening, through pain, disease, and privation, down to a premature grave."

If that be true, how much more true must be the language if applied to the case of our own operatives, who begin their labour at eight years of age, confined in the unhealthy towns in which labour is carried on, and continue their work till the latest period at which they are able to gain their livelihood? What opinion does the Select Committee, to whom the petition was referred, express?—

"We think (say the Committee) there are abuses. We think many improvements may be made. We think it would be better if the hours of labour were less—if more time was allowed for meals—if more attention was paid to ventilation and pure air."

They then proceed to comment, with very great severity, and in many instances with unfairness, on the state of the English factories and the people engaged in them. They go on to say:—

"We acknowledge all this; but we say the remedy is not with us. We look for it in the progressive improvement of art and science—in a higher appreciation of man's destiny—in a less love for money, and a more ardent love for social happiness and intellectual superiority."

These are the opinions of the Committee, expressed in their special report; and it appears to me that they have passed an opinion which is applicable, in all respects, to the case before us. Sir, it would really be well, for all parties, both master and operative, if this long-agitated question could be finally set at rest. If you will not concede the whole that we require, concede at first some part of it, and let the success or the failure of the experiments determine the further progress or revocation of the measure. Nothing, you may be assured, will be easier than to repeal such a law should its results prove injurious; the operatives will, themselves, be the first to cry out if their condition be seriously affected; should the results be beneficial, we shall trust to your willingness to accomplish our desires, and give us

the remainder of our present prayer. We are ready, at any rate, to try that issue. But without some such arrangement as this, the manufacturing population will never desist from their efforts for redress; vain is the hope to weary them out by perpetual refusals; they gather resolution under defeats; and at no period have they been more unshaken and courageous than in this present hour, in which I am urging, for the tenth time, I believe, their just and reasonable demands. You cannot wonder at their perseverance, it is natural and praiseworthy; they feel the pressure of intolerable and all-absorbing toil, they perceive the success of experiments towards the alleviation of it in their own department of industry; they perceive too the contemporaneous efforts, arising in no small degree out of their own, to obtain the half-holiday system and the early closing of shops, both of which, wherever practicable, have proved highly beneficial. Their growing intelligence shows to them the moral and physical advantages of abridged labour; and their claims, when stated in this House, alway meet with respect, and sometimes with considerable support. Sir, in stating these claims, I have abstained from a repetition of evidence adduced, at various times, to exhibit the amount of moral and physical suffering endured by these young persons. This has been a disadvantage to my argument; but I was fearful of wearying the House. I have abstained also from repeating the several calculations made by experienced operatives themselves, on which we maintained that either there would be no abatement of wages, or that, if there were any, they would be enabled, under a reduced period of labour, to establish such economies as would more than compensate for a diminished income. Be this as it may, I do say on their behalf, that they are fully prepared—and I did not, when I proposed the question to them, hear a dissentient voice—to submit to any contingency, in return for this concession to their prayers. Sir, we have reason to thank this House, that its successive interpositions in behalf of the factory population have produced most beneficial results, and specially by its enactments which enjoin that certain hours in every day should be set apart for the education of the younger workers; but the education of a people requires something more than this one provision: you must give them time, not only for the acquisition of the necessary elements, but time to retain and practise them. You give to the children, by your present system, a certain amount of literary teaching until the age of 13; they are then, at that period, when the acquisition and experience of whatever is practical would begin, advanced to the full extent of labour, and debarred by their unceasing occupation from the attainment of knowledge, useful—we may say indispensable—to their welfare in after life. This is especially true of the females, who form so large a proportion of the manufacturing population. Their accomplishments, though few and simple, yet unspeakably important to society at large, must be learned in the daily detail of household affairs. They are unsexed in nature and habits by such constant abstraction from domestic duties—duties which they alone can perform—and the community suffers in their toilsome devotion to employments which demand the powers and habits of men. It can find no compensating circumstances in any system which hinders the peace, the comforts, or the honour of the working man's home; but these things will rise or fall with the character and condition of the females; and all the statesmen of every age, and all the maxim-mongers have never surpassed the concentrated wisdom of Madame Campan, who, in answer to a question of the Emperor Napoleon, "What shall I do for the benefit of France?" replied without hesitation, "Give us, Sire, a generation of mothers." Sir, I cannot conclude the appeal that I have now ventured to make to the House without a retrospect at the manner in which the question has been conducted from the beginning to its present position. I believe that it has been eminently beneficial to the operatives themselves. Of oversights and mistakes, through human infirmity, I may have committed an abundance, but in expressions and in sentiments, I have nothing to recall or even to regret. I have carefully abstained, both here and among the people themselves, from all exciting language; I have studied to produce and to maintain a good understanding between the employer and the employed; I have never ceased to exhort those who confided this measure to my charge, that their thoughts, their feelings, and their actions, must be brought under the dominion of self-control. Well, Sir, I rejoice to say that the effort has been successful. I might have resorted to other means, and kept up their zeal by every inflammatory topic on a subject—be as-

sured—not less interesting to them than the repeal of the Corn Laws; I might have collected them, not by hundreds but by thousands, and talked to them of their wrongs and their rights, of where submission ends, and where resistance begins; but I have done no such thing; and I may now say, to the high honour of those who have so long and so patiently sustained this conflict, that I have never witnessed one menacing effort, or heard from them one vindictive expression. Sir, we must not shut out of our view the wide surface of society to be affected by our decision. It is the concern of many thousands. This single class has been selected out of many to bear the forefront of the battle; but the vote of this evening will affect them all alike, for it may fairly be taken as a representative of the whole: it will be a fatal night whenever you decide adversely, for you will have closed all hopes of moral, and even of secular improvement to multitudes of the young and helpless. And will not this tend to widen the interval—already a deep and yawning gulf—that separates the rich from the poorer sort? The rise of the more affluent classes is very observable; numberless luxuries of mind and sense, hitherto attainable by none but the wealthy, are brought within the reach of much smaller people—they are elevated proportionally in the scale of society. The overtoiled operatives, both as children and as adults, are alone excluded from the common advantage; a few, it is true, of special genius, may triumph over every opposing obstacle; but the mass are abandoned to a state of things in which moral and intellectual culture, forethought and economy, and the resources of independent action, are far beyond their means, and not even in their contemplation. This, surely, is an unsound and fearful position; the contrast is seen, felt, and resented; it revives and exasperates the ancient feud between the House of Want and the House of Have; and property and station become odious, because they seem founded on acquirements from which multitudes are excluded by the prevailing system. Sir, I cannot fail to perceive that to weary the House with repetitions of these things would be useless, and, therefore, disrespectful. I will persist, nevertheless, to anticipate success, though I must, perhaps remember that the array of capitalists, backed by the weight of the Ministry, will present an obstacle almost insuperable by persons of far greater power and station than myself. By my course in the last few years, I have accumulated such an amount of public and official odium and distrust, that I cannot but feel I am addressing many whose minds are already averted from the proposition. Should I be defeated, I shall wait for fairer times, and more propitious hearts, conscientiously resolved never to abate one iota of my principles; and fully convinced that if this now mighty nation be destined to sustain its independence, and glory, and power, the counsels of thinking and unselfish men, for the social and religious improvement of all classes of the realm, must eventually and abundantly prosper.

Sir J. GRAHAM: Sir, by the courtesy of the noble Lord I have been enabled to acquaint myself with the provisions of the Bill; and in the course of the morning I apprised the noble Lord that it was not the intention of Her Majesty's Government to offer, on the present occasion, any opposition to the introduction of the Bill. The noble Lord said, in reviewing his conduct in reference to this subject, that he had seen no reason to reproach himself for the part he had taken. In that sentiment I entirely concur; for I am aware that the noble Lord, in the course he has pursued on this question, has undergone great sacrifices, and has discharged his conscientious duty at a greater cost than falls to the lot of most men. But, as I do not rise with the intention of opposing the Motion of the noble Lord on the present occasion, I do not think it necessary to advert to many of the arguments the noble Lord has advanced in support of his measure. I might, if I thought it necessary, follow the noble Lord through the various topics he has referred to on former occasions. I might, in the first place, remind the noble Lord of what he stated as having taken place in the manufacturing districts since the passing of the Act of 1844, and which, so far from rendering legislative interference necessary or expedient, rather implies that the House should abstain from any interference between the employer and the employed in these branches of industry. The noble Lord stated that in some manufactories, which he specified, it had been found to be the interest both of the masters and the operatives that the period of labour should not be allowed to extend to the maximum period allowed by the law. The noble Lord stated that, in some instances, it had become quite common to work only eleven

hours, instead of twelve hours, the period for which the machinery is by law allowed to run; and the noble Lord stated that the result of that experiment was, that more work had been done, and better work as regarded the interests of the masters, and that equal, if not higher, wages had been obtained by the men. If that be the case—and I am rejoiced to hear it—nothing can be more satisfactory; and, so far from legislation being necessary, it appears to me a conclusive argument against calling on the Government to interpose. I do not mean to deny to the noble Lord merit for the arrangements he has already effected; but I wish to call the attention of the House to the changes which have already been accomplished through the unwearied efforts of the noble Lord. Since 1832, the age at which young children employed in factories have been permitted to enter them, has been limited to eight years, and the period of the work of these young children has been limited to six hours. All night-work has been abolished; we have even gone the length of prohibiting adult female labour for more than twelve hours, and young persons between the age of 13 and 18 are restricted from working more than twelve hours out of the twenty-four. I am quite sure that the noble Lord will admit, and I hope the House will remember, that the restriction on the labour of young persons is virtually and completely to restrict the working of the machinery itself, and the labour of adult males, to the same period of twelve hours; and thus the practical result of our our legislation is this—that in the four great staple manfactures of cotton, woollen, silk, and flax, it is not permitted, by law, that any man shall work his machinery, whatever power it may be worked by, for a greater period than twelve hours per day. I will not, on the introduction of the Bill, pursue the arguments to which the consideration of these matters would naturally bring me; but I must say, that to carry interference further in its application to capital and labour, is a dangerous experiment in a country dependent for much of its prosperity on its commercial and manufacturing resources. The noble Lord adverted to many instances of what had been done in foreign countries, and the state of the law in them; but the noble Lord surely will admit that it matters little what may be the law on the Statute-book in any country respecting the regulation of labour; everything depends upon inspection, and the manner in which the law is administered. No reliance can be placed on regulations only. It is not enough to have such a law: you must have the most accurate inspection with regard to its working day by day, and the manner in which its provisions are enforced. It may be asked, entertaining these opinions, which I might state at greater length, and might advert to former debates in which these opinions have been more fully expressed—it may be asked why, entertaining these opinions, I have consented, on the part of the Government, to the introduction of the Bill. In the first place, I reply that this is the first time—although the noble Lord says the question has been distinctly brought before the House since 1833 eight or nine times—this is the first time the noble Lord has moved for the introduction of a substantive measure. On every former occasion the noble Lord has raised the question incidentally, either in committee on some Bills introduced by the Government, or in some of their various stages. But the noble Lord on the present occasion, representing, as he said, the condition of a very large portion of the manufacturing community, has proposed, on his own responsibility, the introduction of a substantive measure. The noble Lord also adverted to the magnitude and importance of the subject. I at once recognise its magnitude and importance; but, in my opinion, while it is our duty to consider—respectfully and tenderly consider—the hopes and expectations of the working classes in respect to a measure of this description, it is the paramount duty of the Legislature and the Government to consider the real interests and permanent welfare of those classes who are so deeply affected by a measure like this. And with reference to the general interests of the public, I cannot lose sight of the moment at which we are called upon to discuss this question—at a moment when a measure intimately connected with it, and of paramount importance, is under our consideration—I allude to the proposed measure with reference to restrictions upon the importation of the first necessaries for the consumption of all classes of the community, and particularly of the class to which the noble Lord has referred—looking to the whole state of matters, I am deliberately of opinion that it will be expedient to postpone the decision of the House upon the principle of this Bill until its opinion has been pronounced upon the great proposition of my right hon. Friend at the head of the Government, in respect to the supply

of corn and the laws which regulate that supply. I should be sorry, however, that any misapprehension should go forth in respect to the feelings and intentions of Government with respect to the particular question now under discussion. I am bound to say, speaking for myself, that no decision with respect to the Corn Laws—intimately connected as that subject is with the one now under discussion—can ever alter my opinion with respect to the propriety of interfering with adult labour in the manufacturing districts. I cannot anticipate that the noble Lord would use—certainly he has never yet used—any arguments which can induce me to support the second reading of the Bill. At the same time I must repeat that, considering the circumstances of the moment in which the Bill is introduced—considering that this is the first time the noble Lord has proposed a substantive measure on the subject on his own responsibility—and considering the importance of the interests concerned in it, I think it would not be just to a person of the noble Lord's high station, and one whose motives are so pure, not to allow him an opportunity of laying his proposed measure before the House. On these grounds, I assent to the introduction of the Bill.

SIR G. STRICKLAND was of opinion that it had been fully proved that every alteration which had taken place with regard to the law regarding the limitation of the hours of labour had been attended with signal benefit to the operatives themselves; and it required more ingenuity than any Member of that House possessed to prove that any thing done further in this matter would be productive of injury. The right hon. Baronet said, that this was a wrong time to introduce such a measure, because the alteration in the Corn Laws the repeal of which he always so determinately supported, would give a great stimulus to manufactures and commerce. If the Corn Laws were to give such a great stimulus, they must foresee a greater demand for labour; and surely, if he understood the subject at all, these were the very reasons why they ought to take the opportunity of doing away with those evils which were in existence, now that they could anticipate the great demand for labour which these evils so much affected. If he understood the noble Lord correctly, he was desirous that the hours of labour should be reduced to ten hours. From the first day he had any thing to do with the question, it was always his endeavour to produce a good understanding between the operative and the master; and his desire was always to induce them to meet in good feeling to settle the grievances of both parties; and he was glad to see that now there existed a better understanding and a more cordial feeling between them, than ever there was since he had any knowledge of them. That cordial and good understanding ought to be taken advantage of to produce a termination of the existing evils; and he thought that the operatives themselves were likely to receive a compromise, however desirous they were to reduce the time of labour to ten hours. He could not sit down without saying a few words to express, at least, his admiration of the great improvement that had taken place in the town which he had the honour to represent. It was in Preston, first of all, that the experiment had been tried; no disadvantage arose; there was no reduction of wages; and he was fully convinced that, if they did not carry the Ten Hours' Bill, some change in the law ought to take place which would prove satisfactory to labourers in the manufacturing districts.

MR. TRELAWNY opposed the introduction of the Bill. He thought persons occupying the position of the noble Lord ought to be the last to touch and injure the rights of property. The noble Lord who had introduced the Bill had stated that no reduction had taken place in the rate of wages since the working of short time; but had he considered a large demand for labour had taken place, which had raised the market? Judging from the exposition made by the noble Lord, the effect of what had been done resembled the action of the Irishman who cut off the bottom of the blanket and sewed it at the top by way of making it longer. If the condition of the labouring classes was as bad as it was said to be, let the Government put on additional taxes to support them—an addition to the Property Tax, if that was deemed proper—but do not make attacks upon the manufacturing interests, which could only end in their injury.

LORD JOHN MANNERS hoped that the House would not be induced by the "wet blanket" eloquence of the hon. Member to reject the wise and humane measure of the noble Lord. With respect to the hon. Member's argument against any invasion of the rights of property, he was deeply impressed with the conviction that if the rights of property were ever disre-

garded in England, it would be in consequence of their suffering such a defence as that of the hon. Member. He was strongly of opinion that hon. Members should be careful in the utterance of sentiments of this description. He would turn, however, with pleasure to the course taken by the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department. But how did the right hon. Baronet connect the Ten Hours' Bill with the anticipated measure on the Corn Laws? Two years ago the right hon. Gentleman urged the rejection of this measure on the ground that if carried it must necessitate a repeal of the Corn Laws; well, the right hon. Gentleman was going, if he could, to repeal the Corn Laws; he was still of opinion that there was a most intimate connexion between the two measures, and yet he now said that, whether the Corn Laws were repealed or not, he never would assent to the Ten Hours' Bill. That enigma needed explanation. There was another observation, too, of the right hon. Gentleman, which created his surprise; it was when the right hon. Baronet argued, that in consequence of the good effects which had been produced by the alteration which had already been made, there should be no further legislative interference. When he heard that appeal to the present state of the manufacturing districts, and the good which had resulted already from the laws which had been passed, and when he heard the right hon. Baronet from these facts draw the conclusion that they had better remain as they were, he was forcibly struck by the counter arguments used the other night by the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government. His argument, after three years' experience, was, that they should not remain where they were. If they were right in repealing the Corn Laws because a certain diminution in protection in 1842 was found to work beneficially to the country, why not put the same argument in operation in this case? He would say, then, that for the present every argument against the Bill of his noble Friend was completely exploded. He should like to hear the arguments against it after the carrying of the repeal of the Corn Laws. He was convinced that he could do nothing more effectual in conciliating the feelings of the operative to the master than to support this Bill. It was because he wished to see a friendly and cordial feeling between all classes that he gave his most unhesitating and determined support to the Bill of his noble Friend.

Mr. HUME said, that while he could not but approve of the good intentions which actuated the noble Lord the Member for Dorsetshire, yet, with all respect for the noble Lord, he could not but think that instead of endeavouring to reconcile differences and to promote good feeling between masters and men, he sought by this legislation to make the masters oppressive, and to interfere with the working man's property, namely, his labour, and with a man's management of his own affairs. His hon. Friend near him (Mr. Trelawny) was, therefore, correct in designating the plan of the noble Lord as an interference with the rights of property. There had been a time (which the noble Lord seemed to have forgotten) when artisans of all descriptions were, by law, thwarted and kept down in all their endeavours to maintain the privilege of using their capital, that was to say, of employing their own time as to them should seem fit. Anterior to the year 1824, only about twenty-three years ago, no labourer could meet with his fellows to talk over or discuss the hours of labour, the amount of wages he received, or to demand 2*d.* or 1*s.* a day more than he got, or to seek an amelioration of his condition, without the whole party running the risk of being brought before the courts of law on a charge of conspiracy, and if convicted for the mere attempt to persuade masters to give them an additional shilling per day, might have been liable to undergo, for twelve or fourteen hours per day, six months' hard labour at the treadmill. But Parliament then swept away the laws which so operated, and, under the law as it stood at present, it was impossible that the labourers of the country could be exposed to such injustice. The labourer was now as much protected in his rights as any proprietor of land or manufacturing capitalist in the country. All were equally entitled to protection, and they now to the full equally enjoyed it. But the noble Lord now proposed a different law to operate upon those masters who had embarked their capital in machinery and mills; and by that law to restrict them in the employment of the capital so invested. This he could not but designate as an invasion of the property of the master; because it would prevent him applying it to the best of his skill and judgment. He, looking back to past events, contended that industry and capital ought to be free; and that no individual, possessing either the one or

the other, should be restrained, except on the single rule of doing no injury to his neighbour, from exercising his right over that which he possessed. This was the principle, and this had been the object of modern legislation upon the subject. On these grounds, he had objected to former measures which had been submitted with reference to this subject to the Legislature. He had bowed to the decision of Parliament, confident that the time was fast approaching when, from the exposure of the errors committed, the necessity of repealing the whole system would be manifest. Sure he was, that the effect of the laws so passed, had been to produce injury, instead of benefit, to the working classes. He could state that he had himself been at Macclesfield within about a week or some short period, after the noble Lord's Bills had come into operation last year, and he had himself seen 300 men there thrown out of employment, because they could not obtain the labour of a sufficient number of children in the silk factories, where they formerly had full employment. The labourers themselves complained that such was the operation of the noble Lord's enactments. He much lamented that it was necessary, as the noble Lord wished it to be believed, that they should work from the earliest dawn till long after night had closed in; but, at the same time, this circumstance afforded no reason why he should consent to make matters worse, by now adopting the views of the noble Lord. He should wish the noble Lord to look at the state of things in a neighbouring country. In Ireland, the population complained of the want of labour, and would be happy to take the place and situation of those on whose behalf the noble Lord was now interfering upon principles which, if carried into effect, would bring actual misery upon them. On the whole, therefore, he could not think, with the noble Lord, that the laws he had succeeded in passing had either been judicious or beneficial; and hence he concurred in the views expressed by the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department. He was satisfied that every argument which had been adduced to-night by the noble Lord could be answered, when the subject came to be fully discussed, to the perfect conviction of every man who gave attention to the subject. The noble Lord had spoken of the town of Lowell, in the State of Massachusetts, and had compared the condition of the labouring population there with similar classes in this country. The comparison, however, could not hold good. The two districts stood in a totally different position. In America the farmers' daughters came to Lowell to spend three, four, or five years, in order, by their industry in manufacturing employment, to earn a dowry for themselves; and after that they returned again up the country, where they married and became farmers' wives. He wished that such could be the case with the unfortunate females who were obliged to toil in the factories of this country. With one part of the speech of the noble Lord he was quite prepared to coincide. He referred to the noble Lord's allusion to a necessary interference by Parliament for the education of the young in principles which would be useful to them in after-life. This he considered an interference which was necessary, and which the welfare of the State required. To afford assistance to the education of young persons in their duties as citizens, and to take that duty where it was neglected by their parents, he would agree; but to interfere, as now proposed, with the employment of capital, whether embarked in machinery or anything else, was in his (Mr. Hume's) humble opinion very injudicious—nay, he would add, very unjust. He was aware that both the noble Lords opposite (Lord Ashley and Lord J. Manners) were sincere in their anxiety to see the condition of the working classes of this country improved; but he regretted to add, that he thought the views they advocated would be mischievous instead of beneficial; and if carried to the utmost extreme, would involve the ruin of the country. On the whole, he was glad the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) had not objected to the introduction of the noble Lord's Bill, because he was convinced that when the matter was fully debated, the noble Lord would himself feel, at the conclusion of the debate, that it would be best to leave the matter alone.

MR. BICKHAM ESCOTT said, that as the Bill was not to be opposed until the second reading, it was not necessary to enter upon a debate on its principle to-night; and he should not have risen, were it not for an observation which had fallen from the noble Lord by whom the motion for the introduction of the Bill had been submitted to the House. The noble Lord had stated, in reference to former decisions of the House, that they had not been the decisions of the House of Commons, but the decisions of Her Majesty's Government.

This seemed to him to be a novel doctrine. If the House of Commons, after a long debate, had rejected a measure which was not palatable to the majority, the noble Lord turned round upon the representatives of the people and said, that they had not exercised any discretion, but had been influenced by Her Majesty's Ministers. As one who had voted in the majority against the noble Lord's proposition, and who would do so again, he protested against this assumption; and he would tell the noble Lord that there were some persons in the country who attributed the rejection of the measure not to the Government—not to the House of Commons—but to the noble Lord who had himself given up his own measure. With regard to the present proposition, the noble Lord said that it would be good for the people and the capitalist that there should be further interference between capital and labour; but the noble Lord had not ventured to argue that question. The noble Lord had not shown that the working man ought not to be allowed to make his own terms; and, maintaining as he did the strongest opinion that nothing could be so detrimental to the interests of the labouring classes as any interference with them, he had also a strong opinion that some of the alterations already carried into effect at the suggestion of the noble Lord, with the most benevolent intentions, had not produced the good the noble Lord contemplated; but on the contrary, that many hundreds labouring men and their families had been reduced to beggary and ruined by the noble Lord's measures. Believing this to be the case, he should endeavour to show it on the second reading of the Bill, from the evidence contained in the noble Lord's own "Blue Books," which the noble Lord quoted fully, but not fairly. The noble Lord, when he quoted, ought to state the evidence taken on the spot, both on one side and the other. When the proper time came, he trusted that the evidence on the question would be fully gone into and discussed, and then it would be seen whether any further interference ought to be made with the capital or labour of the adult; and whether the strong, sturdy, active, and energetic was to be crippled in his means to support his family, by the mistaken philanthropy of the noble Lord.

Mr. COLQUHOUN observed, that the charge brought by the hon. and learned Member for Winchester against his noble Friend (Lord Ashley), was quite novel, and certainly unfounded; for he was in the recollection of the House when he asked if his noble Friend did not travel over the evidence in the most painstaking and persevering manner, before he came to his conclusion upon the evidence. He would ask if two-thirds of his noble Friend's speech was not composed of a statement of evidence and facts. If his noble Friend were to read the whole of the "Blue Book," he would inflict something like a speech in the American Congress, where a gentleman could occupy the floor of the assembly for a week together. He could not concur with the views propounded by the hon. Member for Montrose, when he stated that the delusions which the noble Lord had raised would be dispelled under a sounder view of the question. If any Member had applied the same arguments to a question of trade, the hon. Member for Montrose would exclaim loudly, and by his gesticulations convey a strong dissent to such a line of argument. After thirteen years' experience, he had voted, in 1833, with the hon. Member for Montrose against the Motion of the noble Lord, and he had then said that it was most dangerous to interfere, by legislation with trade or manufactures. He had then said that their interests were combined, and if by any measures, whether philanthropic or not, manufacturing prosperity was affected, great damage would be done to the operative as well as the manufacturer. But when he found, after the experience of twelve years, that no injury had occurred to the manufacturer, and that wages had rather remained stationary, or had increased, he thought the operative had a right to demand a moderate restriction to his labour. Seeing then that no injury had accrued to either party affected, the claims of humanity required a moderate restriction. A reference had been made to Ireland and the want of employment in that country. What was the reason why manufactures were not introduced into Ireland? The answer was, that the local condition of the people afforded no security for the existence of manufactures and that development of manufacturing industry so much to be desired.

Mr. ROEBUCK said, that the proposal of the noble Lord was to restrict the hours of labour of persons under a certain age, and who were not *sui juris*. Granting the admissibility of some such plan, he could not for a moment approve of going a step further—a step he believed the noble Lord meant to take—and interfering with the

labour of adults. He would ask the noble Lord what, on his principles, he would do in the following case? Suppose there were a capital of 100*l.*, out of which ten labourers were to be employed, at the rate, say 1*s.* a piece—that was to say, 10*s.* a day. Well, the capital was to be thus absorbed. What, then, would be the consequence were Parliament to step in and say to the capitalist, "You shan't employ the labourers for the time sufficient to earn the shilling—we restriet the hours of toil?" The necessary consequence would be, that, as the employer was obliged to have the quantity of labour done paid for in the ratio which would be represented by 1*s.* per day, in order to obtain his ordinary profits from his money, he would say, "If your hours are so restricted, I must make you work, or get others to work, by the hour, at a proportionate price to that I paid you for the day." Of course, as the same number of hours were not to be employed in labour, wages would fall exactly in the proportion that they were so restricted. Let them depend upon it, that the price of labour depended upon the supply and demand, and that no legislative interference could satisfactorily regulate its wages. Increase the demand for labour by taking away restrictions from trade, and they would be taking the proper plan to raise wages. But attempt to limit hours, and the result would be failure, however philanthropic the motive. He quite coincided with the hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. B. Escott) in what he had said as to the evidence generally adduced by the noble Lord. No doubt that evidence was, as one of the noble Lord's defenders (Mr. Colquhoun) had characterized it, very full and very elaborate; but he knew enough of evidence to know that there was such a thing as very full and very elaborate garbling of evidence. Nor let them be led away by the hon. Gentleman's appeal to experience, the experience of the last few years. Why, what did that experience prove, but that they had enjoyed a great increase in the demand for labour? But, supposing that the great changes which they were all anticipating, by some accident did not take place, and that the demand for labour should fall off; then they would see, in spite of their legislative attempts, that labour would not be employed, that wages would rapidly fall, and that the operative would be a sufferer instead of a gainer by their philanthropy. The only way to aid the labourer was to give full, free, and complete employment to his powers. The best way to protect labour was to allow it to protect itself. Then it would get its own reward, and legislation would have done for it all that legislation could do. He objected to the course taken by the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary in so easily consenting to the introduction of this Bill. He did see both difficulty and danger in allowing this game to be played. No doubt it was a very advantageous one for those concerned in it. No sort of reputation was so readily gained as that of humanity. It was wonderfully easy—a thing to be achieved by merely accusing oneself of all the cardinal virtues. Indeed, he was surprised that many more hon. Gentlemen did not act upon the plan, did not come forward, and with great pretensions to be kinder-hearted than their fellow men, talk very largely of humanity, and of being the labourer's friends, until their professions came to touch their own pockets, until they were told the real method of relieving the poor—a method involving, perhaps, some self-sacrifices — when in an instant all their humanity vanished—all their generosity was bound up—and it was suddenly found out that to proceed would only end in the dissolution of the State and the destruction of the community. So long as the thing meant words not deeds—bringing in Bills, not practising self-denial—it was very easy to be the poor man's friend.

MR. WODEHOUSE could not enter into the sublime views propounded by the hon. Member for Bath, nor did he agree with the hon. Member for Winchester, for it so happened that in his neighbourhood there were hundreds of women and children who would be benefited by this Bill. He therefore would support the noble Lord.

MR. P. HOWARD thought that further interference at present would be attended with anything but beneficial results towards that portion of the community whose cause the noble Lord advocated. If a ten hours' system were advisable, it would be better it should be put in force by general agreement amongst the manufacturers than by legislative enactment. In agriculture it would be difficult to limit the hours of labour; and if it were difficult to do so in time of harvest, it might also be difficult for a manufacturer, when he received a sudden order, to execute that order within a prescribed period. If this Bill should pass, the noble Lord would have a stronger ground for appealing to the generosity of

the manufacturer to persuade him, as a general rule, to limit the time of labour to ten hours. Such an appeal to his generosity would be more efficacious than legislation.

Mr. MUNTZ thought the noble Lord had not been fairly dealt with. The question had been argued as if it concerned legislation all over the country. He admitted that the argument was a sound one, if you took the general labour of the country; but he did not admit that it was a sound one in the present case. This Bill was intended to apply to factories, or places where spinning or weaving was done by machinery. So far as his knowledge went, the owner fixed the time the engineer should work, and made the people work. He would advise the Government to take particular care on this subject. He did not think that a manufacturer should fix the time, and then make the women and children work that time, whether they wished it or not; and if they did not wish it, then undertake not to give them work at all. There was another circumstance of great weight upon his mind, which occasioned him to vote for the noble Lord's Motion last year, after he had fully examined the question; and that was, that women's labour was preferable, in this species of manufacture, to that of men, and that if a sufficient quantity of women's labour could be obtained, they were employed to an immense extent, and the men walked about doing nothing. He should feel it to be his duty to vote for the noble Lord's Motion, unless on further inquiry he found he was misinformed; because, notwithstanding what had been said by the hon. Member for Bath, he felt it would be for the interest of the people.

Mr. J. O'CONNELL wished to make one remark on the observation of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne—that manufactures had not succeeded in Ireland because of the want of security there. Now, he did not hesitate to say that this was one of those calumnies which were often circulated out of doors, but which he thought it rather too bad to hear repeated in that House. It was utterly untrue that manufactures were driven from Ireland by want of security; but they were extinguished by the very country amongst whose people this taunt was readily accepted as true, depriving the Irish of the only means of manufacturing enterprise—capital and rich consumers. He should be most ready to give his support to this Bill, believing it to be intended for the benefit of the people.

Mr. BRIGHT said, that the speech of the noble Lord appeared to him to be a better speech than he had ever before delivered. There had been no factory cripples paraded on the floor of the House, or statements as to the horrible condition of the people amongst whom he (Mr. Bright) had the good fortune to live. The noble Lord had quoted some extract of a Report of a Committee of the Legislature of Massachusetts, and he had complained that that report painted the condition of the manufacturing population of England with great unfairness. Who was so eminently responsible for any unfairness which might hereafter be committed against the manufacturing population of England as the noble Lord? For if the committee had read the speeches of the noble Lord, and believed them, he did not wonder they should make statements which bore very unfairly on the population of Lancashire and Yorkshire. There was one part of the question which all were agreed on, and that was, that to work ten hours was more comfortable than to work twelve. They were all anxious that the labouring population should work less and have better wages; but when the noble Lord came to demonstrate that, by a forcible suspension of labour, nobody lost and everybody gained, he was altogether wrong. He had brought before the House the case of Mr. Gardner of Preston, and had gone into details as to his establishment. He had listened to the noble Lord; but he had not told the House that when Mr. Gardner, had reduced the time of working from twelve hours to eleven, the speed of his machinery was increased, and that by a unanimous determination to make the experiment answer, certain minutes at breakfast, dinner, and tea time were spared that before had been squandered, and by extraordinary exertion the same amount of work was produced. But Mr. Gardner gave an expectation to his workpeople that he would proceed further in the reduction of hours, and they expected that this winter the time was to be reduced to ten hours; but he believed that he had not made such a reduction in the hours of his mill, and that his manager had informed Mr. Gardner that such further reduction would not be desirable. The noble Lord did not know so much about mills as he ought to do in order to meddle with this question. He (the noble Lord) had once come to the counting-house of the establishment with which he was connected, and one of his (Mr. Bright's) bro-

thers had invited him to look through the establishment. The noble Lord declined to do so; perhaps he might have seen elsewhere all that he could have seen there; but if he had been anxious to know the exact truth, he would not have refused to make himself acquainted with what was going on. The noble Lord was rather too much disposed to look at one side of the question, and attributed evils to the working of mills which in reality arose from the circumstance of large towns and the labourers being left by their more powerful neighbours in a state of very great neglect. It was proved, by the report of Mr. Clay, chaplain to the Preston house of correction, that that class of persons which furnished the smallest number of offenders, in proportion to its numbers, was the class of female workers in factories. The prisoners were classified according to their occupations, from No. 1. class, which furnished the largest number, down to No. 20, the smallest number. No 19 was the class of domestic servants, and No. 20 was the class of female operatives in factories, and No. 14, he thought, was the class of male operatives in factories. This he took to be, in some degree, a proof that there were not those demoralizing and degrading influences connected with the factory syssem which the Members of that House had been led to believe from the statements of the noble Lord. Whatever evils did exist, he was persuaded, were diminishing at a very rapid rate; and there was now, on the part of the employer and the employed, a very cordial and unanimous endeavour to improve, as far as possible, the condition of those who were working in mills and factories. There was one reason which the noble Lord's friends amongst the operatives were constantly bringing forward, in defence of a Ten Hours' Bill. He had met it only the last week, when a deputation called upon him, on this question, in the town of Oldham. As far as Rochdale was concerned, he knew that the last ten hours' meeting held there had been got up principally by the hand-loom weavers in the woollen trade; and they openly avowed that their object in seeking a Ten Hours' Bill was to put impediments in the way of working the power-looms, in the hope that hand-loom labour would be made more valuable. He had said to a deputation at Oldham, the other day, "This is your object;" and one of them replied, "Well, you cannot deny that it is a very good object." He denied that it was; for he thought that to place impediments in the way of machinery would be about the most disastrous thing that the House could do. The hon. Member for Birmingham had referred to the old story about women being employed, and men walking about, and he stated that he had carefully examined into this question. But his examination must have been of the most superficial character; for it was notorious that, at this moment, in no part of the country was labour more scarce than in Lancashire; it was notorious that, instead of men being thrown out of work because women were employed, the very employment which the women carried on gave additional employment to the men. And it was also notorious that, in that district, there was, from year to year, a more steady and continuous extension of the demand for labour, and a better remuneration for it, than in any other part of the United Kingdom. In speaking against the Bill which the noble Lord wished to introduce, he confessed he did it with extreme reluctance; for he acknowledged that a large number of the working classes were in favour of some such measure as this. He did not believe that a majority of them were in favour of it; still less, that a majority of the most intelligent were in its favour; but he believed that a large number were in favour of it, and he was extremely sorry to give his vote, or to speak in opposition to the wishes of a number of honest men. He regarded the measures proposed by the Government—measures which he trusted would be rendered more perfect before they passed this House—as an infinitely greater relief to the working class than any which could possibly come from such legislation as this. And more than this, he was satisfied that when this measure had passed, and there was a steady prosperity prevailing throughout the kingdom, the very laudable feeling which now existed in favour of a reduction of the hours of labour would spread very rapidly. For, whilst manufacturers felt that greater justice was done to them, and that their trade was such as would afford something on their part, the working classes would every day become more powerful and more intelligent — not by violent combinations, or collisions with their employers, but—by a rational union among themselves, by reasoning with their employers, and by the co-operation of all classes; and he firmly believed that many years would not pass over before the measure which the noble Lord recommended, so far as an Eleven

Hours' Bill was concerned—not a Bill, but an eleven hours' system—would be altogether universal throughout the woollen and cotton districts of the North of England. And no man, not even the noble Lord himself, would more thoroughly rejoice in such a consummation than he should, though he was now compelled to give his firmest opposition to the Bill of the noble Lord.

Mr. JOHN FIELDEN said, he feared the hon. Member for Durham had mixed himself up so much with some other association, that he had not had time to attend to this question. However, his experience with regard to the factory workers had been as long and as continuous as that of the hon. Member for Durham; and he thought that a Ten Hours' Bill might be passed this Session with the greatest chance of proving a blessing, not only to the working classes, but to the whole country. He would not now advert to any objection that had been made, except one that had been started by the right hon. Baronet opposite, and caught up by the hon. Member for Durham. It was this: the question was put, "Why don't you at once adopt the ten-hour system, without asking the Legislature for a Bill?" Now, he confessed he should be much more satisfied if the manufacturing interest would adopt the system without any such legislative interference. But the hon. Member for Durham knew what the effect of factory working was; he knew that those working in factories were compelled to be there from a certain hour in the morning till evening. They were not free agents; they had not control over their time; and he was surprised at the two hon. Gentlemen below him, who had taken the same course of argument, to the effect that this measure was an interference with the rights of property and of labour; and they designated labour as property. He did not disagree with the opinion that labour was property, though it was not generally considered such; and he thought it as much entitled to protection as any other property. But, in protecting labour, they must take care they did not injure or destroy the labourer. By refusing the labourer protection, they suffered him to be destroyed by the capitalist, and the Legislature neglected its duty. The protection of labour implied that those who ought to be able to labour should have not only the ability but the means of labouring. By working them too many hours in the day, their power to labour at all was destroyed. The commonest and most every-day experience was sufficient to convince every one that a child of thirteen years of age was not capable of sustaining as much toil as the full-grown man. He would ask hon. Members opposite, would they like one of their children, thirteen years of age, to be dragged out of its bed at five o'clock in the morning, and sent to labour in a factory, whence it did not return until eight o'clock in the evening—thus occupying fourteen or fifteen hours? And was this sort of slavery to be continued? The two hon. Members had urged, that to protect labour was to interfere with the rights of property. That was just the hackneyed argument that had been used in that House when it was appealed to to abolish the Slave Trade. As to the opponents of the measure having the public with them, he contended they had not one in a thousand. He was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Durham advocating this protection of property of labour, without taking into consideration human beings. By connecting the labourers with the steam-engine, they were compelled to work the same time; and this was the state of the factory slaves. He did not rise to make an appendix to the speech of the noble Lord; it needed none, it was complete in itself; but he had risen to answer the arguments of the hon. Member near him. The factory slaves would never forget the services of the noble Lord. Notwithstanding the opposition now made to the Ten Hours' Bill, he was confident it would pass. And what the hon. Member said of the feeling in favour of the Bill, was a very strong argument why the House ought to pass it. On Monday week he had attended, at the request of his constituents, a Ten Hours' Bill meeting at Oldham. The two chief constables had called the meeting, two cotton spinners of considerable importance, who had always before been opposed to the Bill. One of them took the chair; and both expressed their determination to support, in the best way they could, the obtainment of this Bill from the House. Such was the feeling, according to his experience, that prevailed in the country; and the hon. Member for Durham could not deny it. The operatives themselves had no fear of being injured by the result; for they knew that every time the hours of labour had been shortened, more employment had followed, and there had been no suffering from the reduction of wages. And he was quite satisfied, if they passed the Ten Hours' Bill this Session,

that the question would be set at rest, agitation would cease, and the country would prosper better under a Ten Hours' Bill than it had done under the twelve hours' system.

MR. WAKLEY begged to ask the right hon. Gentleman opposite, if, after hearing the speech of the hon. Member who had just resumed his seat, his opinions had not undergone a change? His hon. Friend the Member for Oldham was one of the most experienced, most wealthy, most intelligent, and most humane men in the kingdom—a man universally respected, and one who had ever been the friend of the poor. He was a practical man, not a mere theorist, who would run through granite after a principle. He was not so bigotedly attached to what was called principle as to refuse to change his opinion, or to resist the conclusions to which facts would lead him. The question was, whether infants in this country were to be sacrificed to a principle? The hon. Member for Oldham, he understood, was at the head of a firm which employed thousands of hands; in his establishment was wrought up nearly one-hundredth part of the cotton imported into this country; and what did he say? Surely, the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department would not be insensible to the effect of that speech which the hon. Member had delivered. The right hon. Baronet had intimated that his opinions on this subject were unaltered. Did he not think it rash to make such a statement, after what had lately passed in that House? He must be permitted to say that it was rash and unphilosophical. It was proved now that men could bend their minds to circumstances; that men who had set out with a principle could deviate and adopt a very different course, when reason intimated that it was for the general good to do so. He gave the right hon. Baronet opposite full credit for the sincerity of his change of opinion on the Corn Law question; nothing could be more invidious, or more irrational, than to charge men with dishonesty, because they changed their opinions. In his opinion, that was a disgusting charge, and one altogether unfitted for a legislative assembly. Infinitely worse, and infinitely more dishonest would it be, for a man when his opinions were changed, to utter a falsehood within the walls of that House. He trusted the right hon. Gentleman would apply his mind seriously to the subject, and reflect upon the facts that had been adduced for his information. He was extremely sorry to hear that the right hon. Baronet had given an intimation to the House that he should oppose the Bill. His hon. and learned Friend was an advocate for the representation of the working classes; and he had always advocated the widest extension of the suffrage; he had thought that the working classes ought to be represented here, and it would delight him to see the working men voting in that House. The speeches of some of them would be no disgrace to that Assembly; more splendid speeches, indicative of natural eloquence, he had never heard; and he trusted the day would come when they would be heard in that Assembly. Supposing the working people to have been adequately represented in that House, how many Sessions would pass over before there was a Ten Hours' Bill? It would be passed in the first Session; it would take precedence of everything else. But did the noble Lord, the Mover of the Bill, ask for a Ten Hours' Bill with reference to the working classes generally? Nothing of the kind; all he asked was the interference of the Legislature to protect those infant beings who could not protect themselves: and was not this the business of legislation? The wealthy and intelligent, and those of mental and physical vigour, could protect themselves; it was the infant that sued for succour in this case; and every one who had paid any attention to the subject, who knew what was the condition of our overworked population, must anticipate, with the greatest possible joy and satisfaction, the success of the noble Lord's Bill. If they wished a horse to be a perfect animal, how was it treated when young? Did they begin to work it at two, or three, or even at four years old? If this were done, its physical development would be checked; and the laws of animal life were, in this respect, the same in all. Everybody knew that, in our manufacturing towns, the physical system was becoming imperfect; that was universally acknowledged by all writers on the subject. There was not a medical writer who had devoted his attention to the question who did not express his fears for the results to this country, should the system continue of working the young as we now did. The principles of physiology were the same in all animal life; and the imperfection that must arise from this system would be most deplorable in its effects on the people of this country. His hon. Friend the Member for Montrose, had stated in his speech that he adhered firmly

to the principle involved; but he had afterwards knocked down his own arguments, and had completely tripped himself up. The hon. Gentleman had declared his readiness to interfere with reference to mental education, and yet refused to support the noble Lord, whose Bill went at once to promote that object, by raising the physical condition of the working classes. In this case he had completely abandoned his principle. He hoped the noble Lord would be industrious in the collection of his facts—that he would not garble them, but quote fairly. Let him adduce all the facts he possibly could in reference to this question. He hoped the right hon. Gentleman opposite would bring a candid and unprejudiced mind to the investigation of the subject; and if he did so, he must come to the same conclusion as the noble Lord.

Mr. NEWDEGATE rejoiced to hear the speech that the hon. Member for Finsbury had just made. It did him good to hear that theoretical principle was not to be allowed to overbear the experience of many years in the Legislature; and that the people of this country might still hope that our representative system furnished them enough of experienced men to set at nought theory and its mischiefs. He trusted that the right hon. Home Secretary would consider the relation of this measure to those which Her Majesty's Government had introduced. He had, perhaps, cast aside long experience in favour of theory in that matter; but let him well weigh this consideration, whether, when he was about to introduce the competition of the world with the labourers of this country, it would not be well to afford them some protection; and whether their claim to protection was not strengthened by the force of competition which was about to be brought against them. Allusion had been made to America, the great increase of whose manufactures seemed to threaten a severe competition with our own products. Were the labourers there not protected; and was not the protection afforded to their products the means of enabling the masters there to give relaxation and shorter hours of labour to their operatives? If the Government of this country reversed the case—removed protection, and increased competition—had not the noble Lord a still better claim on the Legislature for protection to the operatives of this country? He trusted that Government would reconsider this question before the Bill came to a second reading. He deeply lamented the course they had adopted; he deeply lamented that they had cast aside a weightier and still more extensive measure than the one proposed; but he trusted that, if only in this little item, they would be warned by experience—by the experience of the manufacturers to whom this Bill principally related, and the experience of one whose medical knowledge gave him a good claim to be heard.

Mr. S. CRAWFORD said, he could not allow the Bill to be introduced without expressing the favourable sentiments he entertained towards it. He represented a manufacturing town, where the cotton and woollen manufactures were extensively carried on; and when the noble Lord proposed his measure on a former occasion, he had taken the pains to make himself acquainted with the feelings of the manufacturing classes of that town, and he was convinced that the working classes were strongly in favour of a reduction of the hours of labour by the Legislature. On that ground, he had supported the noble Lord all in his power; and he had seen nothing since, and heard no argument on the present occasion, to induce him to alter his opinion. He trusted most sincerely that the object of the noble Lord would be attained, and that the working classes would be thereby greatly benefited.

Lord ASHLEY, in reply, said he would now refer to two statements made by the hon. Member for Durham. The statements which had reference to the increased rate of speed of Mr. Gardner's mills, he, on the best authority, had reason for believing to be incorrect. As to the other statement, he had requested the hon. Member for Durham to wait until he had explained the circumstance to which he had referred. [The noble Lord inquired if the hon. Member was in the House, and having been informed in the negative, proceeded.] He had to complain of great discourtesy on the part of the hon. Member for Durham, who, having made a charge against him—a charge of a personal nature—had not remained in the House to hear his reply to it, though he had been requested by him (Lord Ashley) to do so. The circumstance to which the hon. Member alluded was briefly this. The year before last he was in Lancaster, on a visit with the hon. Member for Oldham; and it occurred to him that, as he was within a short distance of Rochdale, where were situated the mills of the hon. Member for Durham, he might as well go over there. He believed himself to be perfectly conver-

tion ; but let us understand—and I am speaking not for myself, but for the many honourable men who have preceded me of different parties—let us understand what is the nature of the obligation we owe for being placed in office. As I said before, I do not undervalue the distinction and the power which are attached to the occupation of that office ; but what, I ask, is its real value ? It does not consist in the power of distributing honours, or conferring appointments. That power, it is true, is inseparable from the office of Prime Minister, and cannot be separated from it without injuring its authority ; but the power of giving the highest rewards and the highest offices, is constantly accompanied by the invidious duty of selection, and the disappointment of those who may not have been selected. For my part, I value power not one farthing for any such privilege. I have served four Sovereigns ; George III., and his three successors. In the reign of George III. the office which I held was so subordinate, that it was impossible my services could have attracted his notice ; but, as I have said, I also served his three successors—George IV. as Regent and King, King William IV., and Queen Victoria ; and during the reigns of those Sovereigns, it has been my fate to hold some of the highest offices in the State. I served each of those Sovereigns at critical times and in critical circumstances—I did so with constant truth to each, and I constantly said to each of those Sovereigns that there was but one favour, but one distinction, one reward which I desired, that it was in their power to offer me—namely, the simple acknowledgment, on their part, that I had been to them a loyal and faithful Minister. I have now stated my view of the obligations which are conferred on those in power ; but let me remark that there is that valuable privilege in power, that it gives constant and favourable opportunities for exertion ; and affords great facilities to the holder of it to render his country service, according to his sense of the public good. That, in my mind, constitutes the real value of official power ; and I can say with truth, that I have never abused that power for any unworthy object. I have tried to use it for the promotion of the public interests and the advancement of the public good. I used it for the public advantage, and in doing so I cannot charge myself with any conduct at variance with the true and comprehensive policy of a Conservative Minister. Sir, I do not think it at variance with Conservative policy, that I and my Colleagues have attempted to repair the disasters of Cabul—that we have attempted to infuse into the Indian army that spirit which had been checked by the defeats and misfortunes of Affghanistan. Nor do I think it inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that I have laboured to assuage that feeling of animosity which for a long time prevailed between this country and another powerful and great nation ; and I cannot think that this paragraph in the Speech of the Sovereign—

> "The Convention concluded with France in the course of last year, for the more effectual suppression of the Slave Trade, is about to be carried into immediate execution by the active co-operation of the two Powers on the coast of Africa. It is my desire that our present union, and the good understanding which so happily exists between us, may always be employed to promote the interests of humanity, and to secure the peace of the world ;"—

I cannot, I repeat, think it inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that we should be enabled to insert that paragraph, and that we should be engaged in trying to efface the recollections of the exploits of both countries in war, or extracting from those recollections everything which savours of bitterness ; that we should be trying to engage in a rivalry, not in exploits on the field of blood, but in an honourable competition for the advancement of commerce and civilization, and the improvement of the social condition of the people. It is not inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that we should increase the trade of the country by removing restrictions ; nor is it inconsistent with sound Conservative policy, that we should reduce the taxation of the country whilst we increased its revenue. It is not, in my mind, inconsistent with true Conservative policy, that we have extinguished agitation and discouraged sedition, not by stringent coercive laws, but by encouraging the idea amongst the great body of the people, that we, the rich and powerful, are willing to take a more than ordinary share of the public burdens, and to remove those burdens from the people so far as it is possible. Sir, believe me, to conduct the Government of this country is a most arduous duty ; I may say it without irreverence, that these ancient institutions, like our physical frames, are "fearfully and wonderfully made." It is no easy task to ensure the united action of an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed constituency. I have done everything I could do, and

have thought it consistent with true Conservative policy, to reconcile these three branches of the State. I have thought it consistent with true Conservative policy to promote so much of happiness and contentment among the people that the voice of disaffection should be no longer heard, and that thoughts of the dissolution of our institutions should be forgotten in the midst of physical enjoyment. These were my attempts, and I thought them not inconsistent with true and enlarged Conservative policy. These were my objects in accepting office—it is a burden too great for my physical, and far beyond my intellectual structure; and to be relieved from it with perfect honour would be the greatest favour that could be conferred on me. But as a feeling of honour and strong sense of duty require me to undertake those responsible functions, I declare, Sir, that I am ready to incur these risks, to bear these burdens, and to front all these honourable dangers. But, Sir, I will not take the step with mutilated power and shackled authority. I will not stand at the helm during such tempestuous nights as I have seen, if the vessel be not allowed fairly to pursue the course which I think she ought to take. I will not, Sir, undertake to direct the course of the vessel by the observations which have been taken in 1842. I will reserve to myself the marking out of that course; and I must, for the public interest, claim for myself the unfettered power of judging of those measures which I conceive will be better for the country to propose. Sir, I do not wish to be the Minister of England; but while I have the high honour of holding that office, I am determined to hold it by no servile tenure. I will only hold that office upon the condition of being unshackled by any other obligations than those of consulting the public interests, and of providing for the public safety.

Lord JOHN RUSSELL said: Sir, I think it necessary to rise at an early period of this debate, in order to offer to the House an explanation of the course which I thought fit to adopt during the late changes in the Administration which have been brought so prominently before us. In order that I might be enabled to lay this explanation before the House at this early period, I applied to the right hon. Baronet opposite, to lay before Her Majesty my humble application, that I might state in my place in Parliament the circumstances which induced me to take office on the receipt of Her Majesty's command, and subsequently to resign that office. I stated to the right hon. Baronet at the same time, that if it were more convenient for the public service, and more conducive to the objects of the right hon. Gentleman—with regard to any measures he intended to bring forward for the consideration of Parliament—that I would postpone my explanation to any later day, that I should be most ready to comply with his wishes by at once consenting to postpone it. The right hon. Baronet informed me, not only that Her Majesty was graciously pleased to comply with my application, but that it perfectly accorded with his own convenience that I should make this statement at the commencement of the Session. I will now offer that explanation; and I trust when I do so, that if it should be found to have any reference to the measure intended to be proposed by the right hon. Baronet, it will be recollected that I agreed to a postponement of the explanation, if the right hon. Gentleman opposite deemed it necessary. Before I make that explanation, it is necessary for me to refer to a letter which has been mentioned in the course of the speech of the right hon. Baronet; and I refer to it, not because he stated that it caused him embarrassment, but because some persons in their comments upon that letter thought it proper to attribute to me motives in writing it, very different from those which actuated me, and which I will now describe. Private affairs induced me to visit Edinburgh at the latter end of October, and remaining in that city until the beginning of November, the Lord Provost and the corporation of Edinburgh did me the honour of conferring the freedom of the city upon me. On that occasion, I addressed the Lord Provost and the Corporation; and I took especial care in that address (stating at the same time that I took that especial care) not to refer to any measures which might be under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government with respect to the Corn Laws. In a short time after that meeting, the Lord Provost expressed to me his regret that I had not given my opinion on the subject of the Corn Laws; and he further said, that it was the wish of many of the citizens of Edinburgh to have a public dinner, at which it was intended that I should be requested to attend. I said that, in such a case, entertaining, as I did, a strong opinion on the subject of the Corn

sant with all the operations of mills, and therefore did not deem it necessary to add to his experience by an additional inspection of the mills at Rochdale; but he visited them simply and solely that he might see the hon. Member, or leave his name, because the hon. Member having attacked him in the House in a way which was highly unjustifiable, he thought he would be acting, in colloquial phrase, "like a gentlemen," to show him that he entertained no resentment towards him, and wished to meet him on friendly terms. He saw the hon. Gentleman's brother on his arrival—conversed for half an hour with him, but said that he did not think it necessary to go over the mills. Why did he say so? Because he was afraid, had he done so, that it would have been said by the hon. Member that he wanted to spy out some defect, or discover some mismanagement in their arrangement: that, he solemnly declared, was the reason he did not inspect them. He could not help, therefore, stating that he thought the hon. Member for Durham had travelled a little out of the record, when he stated that he was one-sided in all his statements because he had not gone over his mills; for he could assure the House that he had given them the whole history of the case.

Leave given. Bill brought in, and read a first time.

LOCAL TAXATION.

MR. WODEHOUSE having asked leave to withdraw a Notice, relative to returns of the amount of certain local rates, for this day, and to renew it for Monday next,

MR. F. T. BARING begged to express his opinion that it would be much better if the whole subject of local taxation, its extent and details, were contained in one paper, than exhibited in various returns, such as the one just postponed. He hoped the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, would accede to that suggestion. He did not ask him for any fresh information, but merely to get that information which they already possessed arranged in a proper form by some public department, by which it would be much better performed than in any other way. It was desirable that the whole statement of local taxation, amounting to 16,000,000*l.*, should be laid before the House from the documents already existing; for it would be better to possess the information desirable for them even in an imperfect form, than to be compelled to look through the whole of the various returns on that subject. He did not wish any new return, but wished the right hon. Baronet to have a statement compiled on one sheet from those already existing.

SIR J. GRAHAM quite concurred with the hon. Member who had just spoken, in thinking it most desirable that such a document as he had alluded to should be in the hands of the House; but at the same time was of opinion that for such a return to be useful, it was absolutely necessary it should be accurate. His hon. Friend had consented to withdraw his Motion, for the purpose of allowing time to confer with the authorities at Somerset House. Any one who had read the very able Report on Local Taxation would know that there were no less than twenty-two local rates, levying 12,000,000*l.* a year. Under the head of the burdens on land, therefore, there would not only be those twenty-two local rates, but the borough rates, as well as all the local rates under the various local Acts. To present all those within a fortnight in one accurate view, was far beyond any means which Government possessed, and he was afraid, were they to attempt to carry it out, so far from the result leading to any accurate conclusion, it would impede the judgment of the House in forming any opinion on the subject. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton had moved for an extensive return of a similar nature, and but three-fourths of the necessary documents had yet reached the Home Office. There were about 16,000 different local highway rates levied, and of those the returns of 12,000 only had been obtained up to the present time. The preparation of the return obtained by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton had occupied nearly a twelvemonth, and he thought the hon. Gentleman must admit that a perfect return could not be made out in the course of a fortnight.

MR. F. T. BARING thought that if the information already existing in the public offices could be presented at one view, it would be a very valuable document.

MR. HUME said, it was a reflection on the Government that so much confusion should prevail on the subject, and suggested that the 16,000 existing rates might be reduced to two or three.

Leave given—Notice withdrawn.

POOR LAW (IRELAND).

MR. F. FRENCH said, he understood it had been intimated last Session that some inquiry should be instituted by Her Ma-

jesty's Government into the working of the Poor Law in Ireland. He wished to know whether it was the intention of Government to grant a Committee of Inquiry in either House of Parliament in the course of the present Session. He was the more anxious upon this subject on account of the danger which was in all probability to be apprehended of a famine coming upon Ireland within the lapse of a few weeks. He had conversed with persons in all parts of Ireland, who agreed that not the slightest dependence was to be placed on the present Poor Law for the alleviation of the distress that might be expected. Under the circumstances, he thought it imperative that some inquiry should be instituted into the working of the law.

Sir J. GRAHAM said, that no inquiry would be gone into on the part of the Government; the law, he feared, was about to undergo a severe trial from the impending distress, but already the Government had reason to be satisfied that it had been established. The existence of workhouses in different districts at this time was most fortunate and opportune; there were also, now, in every moderately sized district, boards of guardians, including magistrates and gentlemen of the locality, who formed an organized body, adapted to the application of means of relief. He was by no means satisfied that the law was a perfect measure; but still, when compared with the absence of any law, they might congratulate themselves on its establishment. He could only repeat the assurance he gave in the last Session, that if any Member of either House of Parliament asked for an inquiry into the operation of the law, the Government would offer no opposition to it; the hon. Gentleman was perhaps aware, that in the other House of Parliament notice of a Motion for an Inquiry had been given by Lord Clancarty. That Motion, or any made by a Member of that House, the Government would not oppose.

Mr. J. O'CONNELL said, the New Poor Law, even in the most favourable times, had been found a heavy grievance in Ireland, and had never relieved the pauperism of the country. It had now to undergo a severe test, and he was convinced it would never succeed. The effect of the approaching calamity could not be exaggerated; they were within three or four weeks of famine, and it should be borne in mind that in Ireland a famine never occurred that was not attended by that dreadful pestilence the typhus fever. An eminent medical gentleman of Dublin, Dr. Corrigan, had shown by inquiries into past history that in Ireland famines were always accompanied by typhus fever. It would give great satisfaction to the people of Ireland to have it declared to them that the Government was prepared, without any unnecessary delay, to carry out some measure, with the object of relieving the existing distress, on a plan more extensive than that which had already been brought forward; that plan was one, indeed, totally unfitted for the occasion, and he wished it to be distinctly understood that he entered his protest against the expectation, if any such there was, that that measure was to be received as a boon by the Irish people. It was nothing for which thanks or gratitude were due; it was but a small return for the money of Ireland which had been taken away from that country by the rulers of this, without qualification or pretext.

Mr. S. CRAWFORD was glad to find that such a measure had been decided upon, and that all was to be done which could be done by the Government to meet the demands of a people visited by unforeseen distress; but it would have to be recollected that the Irish Poor Law Bill did not provide for external relief; and, in the event of a famine, some provision should be made for the unfortunate, to have food supplied to them in their own houses. It was to be hoped this would not be overlooked by the Government.

PUBLIC WORKS (IRELAND) BILL.

House in Committee on the Public Works (Ireland) Bill.

Sir T. FREMANTLE moved to omit the 4th, 5th, and 6th Clauses, and to bring up a Clause for extending the provisions of the old Act to the Public Works.

The Motions agreed to. House resumed.

Report brought up, and ordered to be taken into further consideration.

House adjourned at half past 10 o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, February 2, 1846.

Minutes.] Petitions Presented.—From Cowick, and several other places in favour, and from John Thorp, in behalf of the Inhabitants of Oxford, for Repeal, of the Corn Laws.

PETITION OF MR. GRAHAM.

Lord BEAUMONT presented a petition from an individual named Graham, complaining that he had been detained

for ten days by the Sardinian Government, and praying for redress. The petitioner could assign no reason for his detention, except that his name was the same as that of the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department.

RAILWAY BUSINESS.

Lord KINNAIRD rose pursuant to Notice, to move for—

"A Return of the Amount of Fees incurred by the Introduction of Railway Bills into this House during the last Session of Parliament, and by petition against such Bills, and how applied; distinguishing those paid on each Bill."

His object, he said, in moving for these Returns was to draw their Lordships' attention, if possible, to the great expenses and great hardship attending opposition to Railway Bills when they affected private property. No man would rejoice more than himself at the spread of railways, or their advance in public opinion; but at the same time they should be carried on as much as possible without violating the rights of private property. At present, the expense of opposing Railway Bills was increased one-third by the fees of that House; indeed, the expenses attending every stage of a Railway Bill's progress were enormous. He could mention one instance of a railway in which the estimated expense of construction was 200,000*l.* where all the proprietors along the line were consenting parties, and yet where, in consequence of the opposition of a competing company, the Parliamentary expenses amounted to 15,000*l.* He thought, therefore, that the subject was well worthy their Lordships' consideration, and that some good might be done at that early period of the Session by the appointment of a Committee to investigate the matter. He thought that something might be done by the appointment of a Commission or Board, without at all interfering with the authority of Parliament. Some controlling authority was most necessary at present, when so many competing lines were coming into operation, and accidents more likely to happen than before. He knew that at present several accidents had occurred which were concealed by the companies, but which might be avoided by one uniform system of management. The plan he was now suggesting had been last year tried by the Commons with success. Three or four disputed cases were referred to the Board of Trade; experienced officers were appointed to examine and report, and the decision of the Board, founded on that report, gave full satisfaction to the parties. Another point he thought worthy of their Lordships' attention, was that portion of the Standing Orders which led to the desecration of the Sabbath. He was not then alluding to what had taken place on the 30th of November, as he believed that was unforeseen and wholly unavoidable; but in Scotland it was imperative that railway notices should be posted on the church doors, at which for three successive Sundays the persons posting were obliged to present themselves, in order that they might swear to the fact of their being so posted. The consequence was, that during the last year all the vehicles in the country were in complete commotion for three Sundays, to the great annoyance of the people. He thought a Committee might find out a way in which much of this might be avoided. The expense of serving notices was in his opinion also needless; he thought advertisements in the public papers would be quite sufficient. There was one point on which he could not avoid attaching blame to the Government—he meant their mode of acting as regarded railway deposits. Many persons, not at all interested in railways, had been much embarrassed by the withdrawal of accommodation at the bankers, who were obliged to keep all their floating cash for the Accountant General. He could see no objection to receiving the deposits in the shape of Exchequer bills and Government securities, the object of requiring the deposit being merely to prove that the scheme was *bonâ fide*; and for this purpose such deposits were as good as Bank of England notes. He understood that one company would lose very largely in consequence of their being obliged to convert their Exchequer bills into cash to meet their deposits. With respect to the special subject of this Motion, he begged to mention one case, in which the expenses of the Bill being 500*l.*, the fees of that House amounted to 300*l.* The noble Lord concluded by moving for the Returns recited at the commencement of his observations.

Motion agreed to.—Returns ordered.

AMERICAN TARIFF.

Lord MONTEAGLE, seeing the noble Earl, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in his place, begged to ask him, with reference to an important State Paper which had recently been received from the United States, and which had been quoted

in another place, whether he had received a copy of the Report of Mr. Walker, the Secretary to the Treasury of the United States, wherein certain principles respecting free trade and the Tariff were laid down, which were of a highly enlightened character? If the noble Earl had received the Paper in question, he (Lord Monteagle) would be extremely glad, in case no objection existed on his part, that a copy of the Report of Mr. Walker should be laid on the Table of the House. There was a precedent for this course existing on the Parliamentary Journals, in the case of Mr. Carroll, which occurred during the Ministry of Mr. Canning.

The EARL of ABERDEEN said, that the request of the noble Lord was, to say the least, of an unusual character; and he thought that, if such a practice were to be followed to any extent, that it would lead to very inconvenient consequences. He had no wish to deprive the House of any information which might be considered necessary or valuable by any one of their Lordships; and, therefore, having received a copy of the document in question, he had no objection to produce it, as it did, he was ready to admit, contain much information on the subject about to be considered by Parliament.

LORD BROUGHAM observed, that if the document in question had been received by the noble Earl enclosed in a despatch from an accredited source in the United States, there could have been no difficulty or objection in producing it; but unless it had reached the noble Earl in an official manner, he (Lord Brougham) agreed with him there was great inconvenience in a Member of the Government being called upon to communicate such a document to the House.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, February 2, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW WRIT. For Rutland, *v.* Hon. W. H. Dawnay, Chiltern Hundreds.

PUBLIC BILLS.—1°. Bequests for Pious and Charitable Purposes; Fishery Piers and Harbours (Ireland).

2°. Drainage, &c. (Ireland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Paper Manufacturers of Scotland, for Alteration of the Excise Laws affecting the Manufacture of Paper.—From Nuneaton, Hartshill, Sunderland, and Milngavie, for Repeal, and from Rainton, against Alteration, of the Corn Laws.—From York and Carlisle, for Remission of Sentence on Frost, Williams, and Jones.—From Bolton (7 Petitions), Headfield (6), and Heap (8), for Limiting the Hours of Labour in Factories.—From Romaldkirk, and several other places, against Enrolment of the Militia.

THE PRITCHARD INDEMNITY.

SIR C. NAPIER, in reference to the question of which he had given notice on Thursday, wished to know whether any settlement had been made with the French Government respecting the indemnity to Mr. Pritchard.

SIR R. PEEL said, he could explain to the gallant Officer what had taken place respecting the Pritchard Indemnity. The gallant Officer was, of course, aware that the principle of compensation to Mr. Pritchard had been admitted by the French Government. It was agreed that the amount of that indemnity should be determined by the two commanding officers of England and France in the Pacific. Sir G. Seymour, on the part of England, and Admiral Hamelin, on the part of France, had proceeded to make inquiries on the spot as to the amount of compensation due. Mr. Pritchard had rendered an account of it to them, but as some items of that account had not been sufficiently explained, they had requested him to supply them with some additional information with respect to them. Mr. Pritchard was subsequently removed to the Navigators' Island, where he had been appointed consul. But he had every reason to hope that when the additional information should have been supplied, a settlement would take place. There was no question at all as to the principle of granting compensation.

ENTAILED LANDS (SCOTLAND).

MR. B. COCHRANE said, that he was desirous of asking a question of the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government. He wished to know whether the right hon. Gentleman intended to include in his financial measure any facilities to the holders of Scotch entailed property to improve their estates. And in reference to his question he begged to call the attention of the right hon. Gentleman to that clause of the general law of Scotch entail which called upon the proprietors of entailed property to invest any amount of compensation which they might receive for damage done to their property by railway or similar undertakings, in the Bank of Scotland. He would take the liberty of suggesting, that if there was to be any alteration in the law of entail, the owners of entailed estates should be able to apply that money for the purpose of fencing, draining, and otherwise improving the land. This would be of great advantage, not only to the landowner and tenantry,

but also to the next heir, for whose benefit the clause to which he had referred was intended.

Sir R. PEEL: In answer to the question put to me by my hon. Friend, I beg to state that Her Majesty's Ministers are desirous of giving to the landed proprietors of Scotland in principle the same advantage they propose to give to the landed proprietors in England, with respect to increased means of draining their estates by loans from Government. He asks me another question, which I rather think is founded upon erroneous impressions on his part with regard to the state of the law. I do not believe that in Scotland the obligation to place in the Bank of Scotland that money which may be paid to landed proprietors by railway and other companies interfering injuriously with their estates, rests on the law of entail in that country. I rather think my hon. Friend will find that each separate Railway Bill as it passes does impose an obligation on landed proprietors possessing an entailed estate to deposit the money received from the railway in the Bank of Scotland. The obligation is imposed by each Railway Act, and not by the law of entail. Entailed estates in Scotland are subject to a variety of charges. They may be subject to charges under what is called the Montgomery Act. The possessor of an entailed estate is entitled to charge the reversionary interest with a certain amount, not exceeding three-fourths of the sums expended in permanent improvements, drainage, buildings, fences, &c. By another act, called Lord Aberdeen's Act, the proprietors of entailed estates have the power to charge heirs of entail with certain sums as provisions for widows and children; and by the general law of Scotland, the debts of the creator of the entail are charged on the property. The Lord Advocate introduced last Session into the Clauses Consolidation (Scotland) Act a provision which does effect the main object which my hon. Friend (Mr. Cochrane) has in view. Power is given by the Act brought in and passed last Session, which enables the proprietor of an entailed estate receiving money from a railway company to apply it to the discharge of the burdens which may have been constituted on the heirs of entails, either by the Montgomery Act or Lord Aberdeen's Act, or those charges which may appertain to the heirs of entail in consequence of the debts incurred by the creator of the entail. Whether or no it may be desirable to permit the money so deposited to go to the discharge of the loans obtained from Government, I won't now undertake to say.

Mr. B. COCHRANE said, that it was not generally known in Scotland, that any such power was possessed by the owners of entailed estates as that alluded to by the right hon. Gentleman. At the present moment the banks of Scotland contained a large sum of money paid to landowners as compensation by railway companies.

Sir R. PEEL believed that there was no obligation by which the deposits could not be taken out of the bank. It ought to be known that the money might be applied to the discharge of burdens on the estate affecting the heir of entail.

THE MILITIA.

Mr. T. DUNCOMBE said, that the other evening he had put a question to the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department, as to the intention of the Government to call out the militia during the present year. He had understood the right hon. Gentleman to say that they had no immediate intention of doing so, but that it was their intention to introduce a new law for the enrolment of the militia, and that in any emergency it should be embodied under the amended law. He wished to ask the Secretary at War whether it was a correct interpretation of the intentions of Government?

Mr. S. HERBERT said, that he was not present when the hon. Gentleman put his question to his right hon. Friend. A great deal of the misapprehension on that subject had arisen from not drawing the distinction between training and embodying. The Government had no power to embody the militia, but it had a power to call them out for training, and beyond that it was not intended to go. With regard to the present law it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to amend and consolidate the different Militia Acts, and when such a Bill passed it would be in the power of the Government to call out the militia for training. Whether they were called out for training would, of course, depend on circumstances, and upon that point he would rather not give an answer. But it was not the intention of the Government to embody the militia. If called out it would be for training only. On this part of the subject he was anxious to say a word with respect to the formation of militia clubs, which he understood was being carried on in many parts of the country, and

which offered, on certain pecuniary considerations, to guarantee to persons drawn by the ballot to provide them substitutes. He would recommend to persons engaged in or joining such clubs to suspend their proceedings until they were aware of the measures which would be introduced by the Government, which, as related to the mode of raising the militia force, would be found much less onerous than the present system of the ballot, which the new Act would put an end to. Under these circumstances, he did hope that all parties interested in this subject would suspend their proceedings until they saw what the Government intended to do.

COLONIAL PRODUCE—FOREIGN SPIRITS.

MR. P. M. STEWART rose, pursuant to notice, to ask the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government the questions relative to which he had given notice, or rather for the purpose of calling his attention to the subject, as he did not wish that the introduction of this question should at all interfere with, or be in any manner injurious to the carrying out of the great measure which the right hon. Baronet contemplated. But as the proposed measure contemplated the modification of restrictive duties, as well as removal of protective ones, he only considered it right to refer to the present condition of our own Colonies with regard to some of their productions—namely, rum, molasses, and sugar. The duties upon colonial spirits at present amounted almost to a prohibition. The differential duty between home and foreign spirits in England was 1*s.* 6*d.* a gallon, or about 100 per cent. on the value of the article. In Scotland the differential duty was 5*s.* 8*d.*, or about 450 per cent. on the value of the article; and in Ireland it was 6*s.* 8*d.*, which was a differential duty between home and foreign spirits of about 500 per cent. on the value. It was this enormous duty in Scotland and Ireland to which he wished to call the attention of the Government. Then, with regard to the other branch of the question of which he had given notice, he had only to remark, that there were two articles the produce of our Colonies adapted to distillation, he meant sugar and molasses, and yet at this moment there was a penalty of 200*l.* to which any brewer or distiller rendered himself liable on whose premises such articles might be found; whilst against a great number of deleterious substances no such prohibition existed. He did not wish to demand any specific reply now from the right hon. Baronet; he only wished to throw out these suggestions for his consideration previously to the adoption of his proposed commercial propositions. All these prohibitions to which he referred, so far as could be ascertained from the speech of the right hon. Baronet, remained untouched by his plan. He would not press for a decisive answer now, but merely express a hope that the Government would take these matters into consideration to which he had felt it to be his duty to call their attention.

SIR R. PEEL said, he might perhaps have remained silent; but he feared some erroneous inference might be drawn from such a course. He had no hesitation, therefore, in at once announcing that at present Government had no intention of lowering the present rate of duties on rum, or altering the existing law with respect to molasses in distilleries. It was true the rate of duties in England, Scotland, and Ireland differed very much. The Government had attempted to lessen this difference some time ago in Ireland, by raising the duty on spirits; but this attempt had been found to materially encourage illicit distillation in that country, and therefore they had restored the law to its original condition, and even lowered the duty on spirits in Ireland. He was sure the hon. Gentleman opposite did not mean to propose that there should be a different rate of duty levied on rum imported into England, Scotland, and Ireland, and such was not the intention of the present Government; if such a thing was done great inconvenience might arise from it. The hon. Gentleman must be aware, with respect to the other branch of his question, that the prohibition against the use of molasses was only in operation with respect to those premises licensed for the distillation of spirits from corn.

DRAINAGE (IRELAND).

SIR T. FREMANTLE moved the Order of the Day for the Second Reading of the Drainage (Ireland) Bill.

On the Question that the Bill be now read a second time,

MR. F. FRENCH said, the impressions which he entertained relative to this measure when it was first announced were fully strengthened and corroborated by a careful perusal of the provisions of this Bill, which had only been printed that morning. He conceived that the landed

proprietors of Ireland had great reason to complain of this Bill, which took a good deal of responsibility and discretion, with regard to local improvements in Ireland, out of their hands, and transferred them to a Public Board. A former measure, which had been introduced into the House of Commons, giving an unreasonable power to this Board, had been thrown out in consequence of the unreasonable power which it proposed to give. Now the present Bill, he contended, instead of giving employment to the people of Ireland, as it was supposed, and as he gave the right hon. Gentlemen the Members of the Government opposite credit for intending to do, would do no such thing. He believed it would rather lie as a dead letter, or, if operative at all, it would be so injuriously. Much as he might think of the character and intelligence of the gentlemen who composed the Board of Public Works in Ireland, he did not think—and he made the observation without meaning any disparagement to them individually or collectively—they could carry out the provisions of the proposed Bill; and that House was asked to place a large sum of the public money at their disposal. The Commissioners were taking advantage of the famine impending at this moment over 4,000,000 of the people of Ireland, to endeavour to get from the House of Commons and the Irish Members powers that never would be listened to under other circumstances. He contended for it that the landed proprietors of Ireland were those most calculated to take upon themselves not only the improvement of their own estates, but the employment of their poorer fellow countrymen. But by this Bill the Board of Public Works in Ireland was to take upon itself all questions relative to the employment of the people and the expediency of carrying on such or such a work. Would the Gentlemen of England sanction in their country the giving of such powers as were proposed in this Bill to any public board? All they asked in Ireland was to have the same power intrusted to the landed proprietors there, as was given to the same class in every other part of the Empire. Let them have the power to borrow money at a reasonable interest—at so much per cent., and with as stringent regulations for the repayment as they pleased. Let them employ their fellow countrymen—they were more interested in the employment and comfort of the people, as well as the improvement of the country, than any public board could possibly be. He had some experience of the operations of this Board, and he had to observe that its interference was generally unsatisfactory and uncalled-for. He hoped the Government and the House would consider the question fully before those objectionable powers to which he referred were granted by this Bill.

Sir T. FREMANTLE said, it had been the wish of the Government to obtain the best possible information as to the working of such a measure as that proposed, as well as to consult the opinions of such Gentlemen connected with Ireland as would be most likely to form a just and fair conclusion of its probabilities of success. But with respect to the opinion expressed upon the measure by the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down, he (Sir T. Fremantle) did not think that any one in the House would take precisely the same ground as the hon. Member for Roscommon. He believed if any works were undertaken by any other parties than those authorized in the Bill, a much greater degree of expense would be incurred in their construction than would otherwise be the case. Now, if there was a certain duty imposed by this Bill which they were then discussing, upon the Board of Works, the Board ought to have conferred upon them a power to discharge that duty which was imposed upon them. It was a duty which they neither desired nor sought for. But it would be quite impossible to carry out the works which might be undertaken under the provisions of the present Bill satisfactorily or usefully without the authority given in the Bill. As to the reduction of the required number of consents from two-thirds to one-half, he (Sir T. Fremantle) had formerly been very much of the hon. Member's opinion; but so many representations had been made to him, when in Ireland, that works were stopped, not from active dissent or opposition of proprietors, but from indisposition to come forward, that that opinion had been changed. He considered this measure of great importance as regarded the improvement of the large rivers—they were the highways of the country; and the Legislature had a right to step in, if the proprietors did not see their own interests in reference to them. The hon. Gentleman said, the proprietors would see it their own interest to drain their lands; but it should be recollected that it was necessary to the drainage of private estates that they should look after the rivers

which supplied the means of carrying off the surplus water; until this was done it was altogether vain for any one to attempt the drainage of their land. He would be ready to consider the details of the Bill in Committee. But he hoped there would then be no objection to its second reading; and he would give his best consideration to any alterations that might be suggested to them.

SIR R. FERGUSON said, one great cause of complaint was the enormous preliminary expense incurred, and the extraordinary powers possessed by the Drainage Commissioners, who in their proceedings prepared no estimates, and were guided by no plans or estimates, nor indeed by anything else. The whole effect of the present Bill was to increase the powers of the Board beyond all precedent. It was, perhaps, the most objectionable measure ever introduced in reference to Ireland. The power of compulsory levy in Ireland had now got to such an enormous extent, that it ought to be checked instead of being extended. He hoped that the Government would consider well before they pressed the present measure; and he would ask why did they not bring over the Chairman of the Commissioners of Public Works here? He objected to the manner in which that Board exceeded all ordinary estimates, and, instead of letting the works to others, kept them in their own hands. In conclusion, the hon. Gentleman referred to the immense improvements which had taken place in agriculture in Ireland, particularly during the last ten years, in proof of which he referred to the reports of the Irish Agricultural Society.

MR. O'CONNELL said, he meant to vote for the second reading of the Bill; and it appeared to him that the discussion of its details ought to be reserved for the Committee. He had no complaint to make of the Board of Works, although Irishmen were supposed to be ready enough to make complaints. The only proceedings of the Board of Works of which he thought there was any reason to complain, were the enormous preliminary expenses; and those expenses were not attributable to the Board. In his opinion a great improvement would be ensured by the provision requiring that the measure should be carried into effect with the consent of one half of the parties whom it would affect. The right hon. Baronet would have ample time to consider the details of the subject; for the Bill could not be carried into effect for some time, as the waters were at present high in every part of the country, and no draining oould be commenced until the lapse of a considerable period. He heartily concurred in the Motion for the second reading of the Bill, but he hoped it would be deliberately considered before it was brought into operation.

Bill read a second time.

PUBLIC WORKS (IRELAND).

The Order of the Day for the further consideration of the Report on the Public Works (Ireland) Bill having been read,

MR. F. FRENCH wished to take that opportunity of expressing his regret to find that his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Cork (Mr. O'Connell) was so much in favour of compulsory presentments. Since 1833 the money on account of the compulsory presentments amounted to 1,300,000*l.*; yet it was proposed to give all the powers they possessed in a more objectionable form than that in which they originally stood. By the 5th Clause every power to which objection had been taken as to the extraordinary presentments was renewed, and he thought that they had great cause of complaint with his right hon. Friend in thus pressing upon them this course, inasmuch as they understood from him that the power given in this clause would be withdrawn.

SIR T. FREMANTLE said, he had merely stated on a former occasion that he would withdraw the clauses to which his hon. Friend referred, but that he would bring up other clauses in place of them. He was then acting in conformity with that engagement; and he thought that the provisions to which his hon. Friend objected ought to be maintained. He proposed to omit the words relating to repairs in the 4th Clause, and he hoped that that alteration would, to a certain extent, meet the objections of his hon. Friend.

SIR R. FERGUSON said, the words having reference to repairs were to be withdrawn, but still the same thing would be included under the word "improvements." He proposed that the Government should leave out the 5th Clause altogether; it was impossible they could ever make these compulsory presentments justifiable under any form. The compulsory powers possessed by the Board were a great subject of complaint in Ireland.

COLONEL CONOLLY should be sorry to retard a measure which the Secretary for

Ireland was so anxious to advance, and which it was desirable should be enacted as soon as possible, with the view of giving some employment to the people; but he quite agreed with the two hon. Gentlemen opposite, that the county Members were called on to object to the proposed compulsory presentments; because the very fact of their being compulsory cast an imputation on the grand juries, which he did not think they deserved, by superseding them in those very functions for the performance of which they were elected.

Sir R. FERGUSON moved the omission of the 5th Clause, on the ground that it would give to the Commissioners unlimited powers.

Sir T. FREMANTLE said, that the power of the Commissioners would not be unlimited, as they would extend to a sum of only 50,000*l*.

Mr. F. FRENCH felt it his duty to support the Motion of the hon. Member for Londonderry.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER said, that no one who understood the point under discussion could suppose that the clause involved any violation of principle. The course now in Ireland was, where the Treasury gave one half the sum required, there was a compulsion on the grand jury to pay for the remainder of the work when finished. The present Bill provided, that if there was any manifest improvement to be made to an existing work, and the Treasury made the grant to that work, then the grand jury should provide for the repair of that work in the same manner as if the work had been a new one. As to the compulsory clauses, neither the Treasury nor the grand jury could move unless first a meeting of the cesspayers had been held to decide whether the work should be undertaken or not; and on their petition to the Treasury, and on the grant being made according to that petition, the grand jury should act; but only in that case. Under the present circumstances of the country, when it was desirable in particular districts to set about works of a more extensive character, in order to give persons scattered over a great extent of country occupation near their homes, he thought there could not be a more reasonable proposition than that of his right hon. Friend.

Mr. S. CRAWFORD said, the right hon. Gentleman was mistaken with respect to the cesspayers. It was not the cesspayers in general that possessed the power to which he had alluded, but a small number selected that had to decide on the propriety of the work. He disapproved entirely of compulsory presentments.

Mr. HAMILTON hoped hon. Members would not persist in their opposition.

Sir R. FERGUSON persisted in his Motion, and

The House divided on the Question, that the words proposed to be left out stand part of the Bill:—Ayes 97; Noes 3: Majority 94.

List of the Ayes.

A'Court, Capt.
Acton, Col.
Antrobus, E.
Archbold, R.
Baillie, H. J.
Baillie, W.
Baldwin, Barry
Barron, Sir H. W.
Borthwick, P.
Bowring, Dr.
Bright, John
Brotherton, Joseph
Browne, Hon. W.
Bruce, Lord Ernest
Buller, Charles
Buller, Sir J. Yarde
Busfield, William
Butler, P. S.
Cardwell, E.
Cayley, E. S.
Chapman, B.
Clements, Visc.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.
Cochrane, A.
Cockburn, rt. hn. Sir G.
Collett, W. R.
Collett, J.
Craig, W. G.
Crawford, W. S.
Curteis, H. B.
Dawson, hon. T. V.
Denison, E. B.
Douglas, Sir C. E.
Drummond, H. H.
Duncan, G.
Escott, B.
Esmonde, Sir T.
Forbes, W.
Fremantle, rt. h. Sir T.
Gaskell, J. Milnes
Gladstone, Capt.
Gore, hon. R.
Goulburn, rt. hon. H.
Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.
Greene, T.
Gregory, W. H.
Grogan, E.
Hall, Col.
Hamilton, G. A.
Hamilton, W. J.
Hawes, B.
Herbert, rt. hon. S.
Hodgson, R.
Hogg, J. W.
James, W.
Johnstone, H.
Lennox, Lord A.
Liddell, hon. H. T.
Lincoln, Earl of
Lindsay, hon. Capt.
Lygon, hon. Gen.
Macnamara, Major
M'Neill, D.
Mahon, Visc.
Maule, rt. hon. F.
Morris, D.
Napier, Sir C.
Neville, R.
Nicholl, rt. hon. J.
O'Brien, C.
O'Brien, J.
O'Connell, D.
O'Connell, M.
O'Connell, M. J.
O'Connell, J.
Patten, J. W.
Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
Peel, J.
Plumridge, Capt.
Rawdon, Col.
Reid, Sir J. R.
Repton, G. W. J.
Ross, D. R.
Russell, Lord J.
Smythe, hon. G.
Smollett, A.
Somerset, Lord G.
Somerville, Sir W. M.
Staunton, Sir G. T.
Strickland, Sir G.
Sutton, hon. H. M.
Thompson, Mr. Alderm.
Thornely, T.
Trench, Sir F. W.
Turner, E.
Wood, Col. T.
Yorke, H. R.

TELLERS.
Young, J.
Cripps, J.

List of the Noes.

Conolly, Col.
O'Brien, A. S.
O'Conor Don

TELLERS.
Ferguson, Sir R.
French, F.

Report agreed to; Bill to be read a third time.

FISHERIES—PIERS AND HARBOURS (IRELAND).

Sir T. FREMANTLE rose to move for leave to bring in a Bill to afford encouragement to the construction of small Piers and Harbours calculated to extend the Fisheries in Ireland. No subject since his official connexion with Ireland had occupied more of his attention than this; and he hoped the House would agree with him that it was most desirable to extend and encourage the fisheries both in rivers and the sea. When it was considered what the extent of the coast of Ireland was, and how much indented it was with bays and estuaries, no one could doubt that the whole coast was admirably calculated to supply the finest fish. He regretted to say that, whatever exertions had hitherto been made, had not been successful. The fact was, the fisheries were in a neglected state. Grants had been made in former times for piers, harbours, boats, gear, and nets; and roads had been made and various devices adopted; but he was sorry to say they had all hitherto failed, and the fisheries had relapsed into a state of inaction. He feared there was some want of enterprise, but the first thing to raise the fisheries appeared to him to be providing the fishermen with boats of sufficient size to go out into the deep sea. The number of such boats at present in Ireland was not great. The reason was, that on very few coasts were there any landing places, piers, or harbours, to afford conveniences for this kind of fishing. Smaller boats only were used, which did not require any landing place or pier. The best mode of encouraging the employment of large boats, appeared to him to be to increase the number of piers on all parts of the coast of Ireland. He proposed, therefore, that in this Bill the sum of 50,000*l.* should be voted, to extend over five years, at the rate of 10,000*l.* a year, for the construction of piers and harbours for fishery purposes on the coast of Ireland. He also proposed that the Treasury, or Board of Works, should advance three-fourths of the sum required for the construction of each of these piers and harbours, and that the remaining fourth should be provided for in a way to be afterwards decided by the Board of Works. Many of the piers and harbours constructed under the old Act had not been constructed in the most convenient spots for the public generally. He hoped the House, therefore, would allow as large a limit as possible to the power of the Board of Works on this point. With reference to the mode of raising the remaining fourth of the expense of these piers and harbours, they could not lay down a rule for every case; but it was proposed to grant power to the Board of Works to determine how this should be done in each case. If there was a gentleman who had an estate in the neighbourhood which would be benefited by it, then the Board would say that he should pay the remaining part of the expense. If there was no landed proprietor in the neighbourhood who would be particularly interested in it, but if the locality would be benefited, then the Board would levy a rate on the inhabitants of the county. If, on the other hand, it was connected with some public line of road, the Board would recommend that the grand jury should make a presentment for that portion of the expense. In some instances it would be raised partly in one way and partly in another. Power would also be taken for the purchase of land for the enlargement of harbours. It would also be desirable that facilities should be given to poor fishermen for the washing of their nets, and that means of curing should be provided. The rents of the fishermen's houses and the tolls levied on the piers would afford the means of keeping the piers in repair. As to the means of providing boats, he thought that this would best be done by combinations of individuals. This had already been tried and found successful by a company in Waterford. He concluded by moving for leave to bring in a Bill to afford encouragement to the construction of small Piers and Harbours calculated to extend the Fisheries in Ireland.

Mr. ROSS was glad to find that the Government had taken up this subject. He had himself taken a great interest in a fishery in his part of the country, and by proper management had made it a most successful speculation. Such a measure as that was highly necessary at the present moment, particularly as the state of Ireland was most alarming. He had seen a letter that morning from Lord Lurgan, stating that the hon. Member for Cork (Mr. O'Connell) had not in the slightest degree exaggerated the present unfortunate condition of Ireland.

Sir H. W. BARRON approved of the Bill as far at it went; but he thought that it ought to have been carried much further. Piers and harbours were of the first necessity on the coast of Ireland, and

they ought to be constructed on the same admirable system as those which had been made with so much success on the coasts of Scotland. It was a melancholy fact that a great quantity of fish which had been cured in Scotland was actually imported into Ireland, although the Irish coasts abounded in fish, and afforded much more than sufficient to supply the demands of the Irish people themselves, leaving a considerable surplus which might be exported to foreign countries. The fisheries which had already been established in Ireland had met with great success. There were two companies in his (Sir H. W. Barron's) immediate locality, one of which had been established principally on account of the harbour of Dunmore, on the eastern coast of Waterford, which had been built at the public expense, though perhaps not on the best principles. Mr. Strangman (to whom the right hon. Baronet had alluded) was connected with one of these companies, and had been extremely successful. The company had made a clear profit of 20 per cent., besides appropriating a sum of money for repairs, and a sinking fund for contingencies. He mentioned this to stimulate other parties to proceed in the same course, as he was quite sure that they would find their account in it. Another company had followed Mr. Strangman's company, and had been equally successful, since the profits yielded at the present moment upwards of 20 per cent. on the capital invested. There was one point in the speech of the right hon. Baronet which he did not exactly understand. The right hon. Baronet had said that a sum of 50,000*l.* which he proposed should be granted was to be extended over a period of five years. Did the right hon. Gentleman mean by that to say, that the money could not be spent in one or two years, but that it must not be spent in less than five? He thought that as much as possible of that sum should be expended in the approaching spring and summer, for the reasons which had been already alluded to by his hon. Friend below him. He thought it but right, whenever the opportunity was afforded him, to press upon the Government the very great necessity there was for attending to the famine which was now hanging over Ireland. If it were at all necessary that additional testimony should be given as to the urgency of the peril, that testimony he had it in his power to supply. He had received a letter from a member of the committee of the board of guardians of the city of Waterford, which committee had been appointed to report on the state of the potato crop, and the prospects of the poor in that locality. The Union in which Waterford was situate was very large, extending fourteen or fifteen miles in every direction round the city. The gentleman to whom he referred had taken a very active part in the labours of the committee, being himself the agent for a nobleman who had very considerable property in that part of Ireland. His correspondent wrote thus:—

"The potato crop is rapidly progressing to utter destruction. The last accounts are unanimous on this point. The interior of the potatoes is black and actually rotten."

He was more and more convinced every day that the fatal disease which had attacked the potatoes was advancing, and that in a few weeks the poor of Ireland would be placed in a most alarming position. He should not do his duty, therefore, unless he warned Her Majesty's Government of this impending evil, which must be met with a bold hand and with decided measures.

Mr. GREGORY said, that the right hon. Baronet who had brought in the Bill was not aware that, in certain parts of Ireland, where there were the greatest opportunities for promoting fisheries, the object of the Bill would be thwarted by corporations who had got into their own hands the power, though he would not say the right, of fishing. He would point out to the attention of the right hon. Gentleman the bay of Galway, where a corporation held the Cladagh fisheries. These people had laid down such regulations, that no person could fish before or after a certain time, or on any day but when the company's boats went out themselves. To show the extent to which this tyranny had gone, he would just mention one instance of it which occurred last year. They allowed fishing with the hook, but interdicted the use of the trawl, which, as every person who was acquainted with fishing knew, was the most effective mode of fishing. A friend of his introduced the trawl in the bay, and caught an enormous quantity of fish of the finest description, with which the whole neighbourhood was supplied. As soon as the fishermen of Galway heard of this encroachment upon their prerogative, they sallied forth at once, and nothing but the providential interposition of the police prevented the utter destruction of all his friend's fishing apparatus. Application was subsequently made to the Castle, and

a small ship of war was sent round to the bay of Galway, in order to protect persons engaged in the fisheries. If the Government would act upon the precedent which was set upon that occasion, and take care that the fishermen should be allowed to pursue their occupations in peace, he was sure that the Bill would have the best effect upon that part of Ireland which relied on fishing for the means of subsistence. The Irish fishermen ought to have the epportunity of using the trawl on their own coasts, and not be compelled to stay at home while the fishermen from Torbay came round with the trawl, and swept the fish into English boats.

Leave given.

Bill brought in and read a first time.

House adjourned at a quarter past seven o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, February 3, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—1ª· Religious Opinions Relief.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Magistrates and Town Council of the Royal Burgh of Selkirk, for Repeal, and from Barton-le-Street, and several other places, in favour, of the Corn Laws.

RELIGIOUS DISABILITIES.

The LORD CHANCELLOR brought in a Bill to relieve Her Majesty's subjects from certain penalties and disabilities in regard to their religious opinions; and he moved that it be read the first time.

LORD CAMPBELL asked the noble and learned Lord whether this Bill was in accordance with the recommendations of the Commissioners who had been appointed to inquire into this subject? He understood the Commissioners had actually framed a Bill for this very purpose, which Bill was now upon the files of the Court of Chancery.

The LORD CHANCELLOR, in reply, said, that no such Bill as that referred to was upon the files of the Court of Chancery. His noble and learned Friend was correct in stating that the Commissioners had framed a Bill; but the Bill now brought into the House was not the Bill recommended by the Commissioners; because it appeared to him better that the Commissioners' measure should be divided into two. The Bill now before the House formed one of those two measures; the other, which related to the oaths of supremacy, allegiance, and abjuration, would form matter for subsequent consideration. As the two subjects appeared to him to be distinct, he had requested the learned gentleman at the head of the Commission, Sir Edward Ryan, to divide the Bill recommended by the Commissioners; and the present was one of the Bills so divided.

Bill read 1ª.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, February 3, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW WRIT. For Chichester, *v.* Lord Arthur Lennox, Steward of the Manor of Hempholme.

NEW MEMBERS SWORN. For Midhurst, Spencer Horatio Walpole, Esq.—For Lichfield, Hon. Edward Mostyn Lloyd Mostyn.—For Newark, John Stuart, Esq.

PUBLIC BILLS.—3°· and passed:—Public Works (Ireland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Langton, and numerous other places, against, and from Cripplegate Within, and several other places, for Repeal, of the Corn Laws.—From Roche, and several other places, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From White Abbey, Manchester, and other places, in favour of the Factories Bill.—From Aberdeen, for Abolition of Exclusive Privileges of Incorporated Trades (Scotland).

THE TIMBER DUTIES.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: I do not know, Sir, whether it is regular or not; but whilst I am in possession of the House, and this being the last evening on which I should have an opportunity before the departure of the next mail for America, I am anxious to take this opportunity of announcing the intentions of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the alterations about to be made in the import duties on timber. We propose, Sir, to make, ultimately, a reduction in the differential duties upon upon foreign timber, so that the duty shall remain, after the reduction has been effected at 15*s.* instead of the present amount. On hewn timber the duty is at present 25*s.* We propose to reduce it to 15*s.* But with the view of insuring to the consumer as much benefit as possible from the proposed reduction, we shall effect it in the manner I am about to explain. With regard to timber from the Baltic—in consequence of the very great demand for it, we do not propose that the reduction shall be immediate. We propose that it shall commence on the 5th April, 1847, considering that period as one most suitable. We propose that on the 5th April, 1847, the duty shall be reduced 5*s.*, and on the 5th April, 1848, we propose to reduce it by another 5*s.* Sawn timber we propose to reduce by 6*s.* on the 5th April, 1847, and by 6*s.* on the 5th April, 1848. With respect to the small timber, such as

laths, spars, and other sorts, we propose to make a proportionate reduction; but whether or not the reduction, having regard to the interest of the consumer, should be immediate, is a subject for consideration. Whether it should be effected without any more gradual reduction, we should wish to reserve for further opinions, as it may be a question whether the reduction might not be absolutely made on the 5th April, 1847. In the course of the evening the full details will be laid on the Table of the House; but I thought it necessary to make these few observations at the present opportunity.

Mr. HAWES: There will be no alteration of the duties this year?

Sir R. PEEL: The duties will remain the same until the 5th April, 1847. From that date there will be a reduction in hewn timber of 5*s.*, and in sawn timber of 6*s.*; and from the 5th April, 1848, there will be a further reduction of 5*s.* and 6*s.* respectively.

THE MINISTERIAL MEASURES.

Sir R. PEEL, as he was upon his legs, would ask a question of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne, or, if the hon. Gentleman was not in the House, the question could probably be answered by some of the hon. Gentlemen who usually acted with him. The hon. Member had given notice that he would, on Monday next, on the Motion being put that the Speaker leave the Chair, on the House going into Committee on the commercial policy of the country, move an Amendment. Perhaps it would be well that the House should be put in possession of the nature of the Amendment the hon. Gentleman intended to move.

No reply was given.

THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. CHAPMAN—THE CORN LAWS.

Mr. WODEHOUSE rose to move for—

"1. Copy of the Warrant, or other document of authority, by which H. S. Chapman, Esq., Assistant Commissioner under the Commission appointed to inquire into the condition of the Hand-loom Weavers, and acting in that capacity in the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1838, was afterwards appointed Chief Judge of the Supreme Court at Wellington, in New Zealand, in 1843. 2. Papers relative to Tariffs published in the United States, and presented in pursuance of an Address of the 18th of July, 1828, viz.: Copy of a Despatch from H. U. Addington, Esq., to Mr. Secretary Canning, dated Washington, May 30, 1824, and of Mr. Vaughan to Viscount Dudley, dated Washington, August 13, 1827, with other Inclosures.

In moving for those returns he begged to state most distinctly that he had no notion of doing so in a spirit of hostility towards Mr. Chapman. It was due to that gentleman, who had received the highest testimonials from the Judge-Advocate, from the hon. Member for Liskeard, the hon. Member for Cumberland, the hon. Member for Bath, the hon. Member for Westminster, and other friends of his, to state that he believed the noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies was perfectly justified in the appointment he had made. But he was justified in bringing forward his present Motion, because in the report which Mr. Chapman had made when he was Commissioner under the Commission issued to inquire into the Condition of the Hand-loom Weavers in 1838, there were errors—errors of so serious a kind that it was quite impossible to pass them over. For instance, he had said, in speaking of the price of wheat from the year 1800 to 1815, that it was above 80*s.*, not unfrequently 100*s.*, and that in the few following years after 1800 it approached 125*s.*, whilst in 1802 it was but 67*s.*; in 1803, 57*s.* 1*d.*; and in 1804, 60*s.* 5*d.* In 1814 and 1815, Mr. Chapman said that wheat at that period was rather less dear. Now, what he called rather less dear, was 75 per cent. less. But as most of that gentleman's calculations were drawn from the year 1800, he would pass to that period, which was the most remarkable in the annals of this country, it having been the last year in which there was the visitation of famine. In that year there was a Report from a Committee of the House of Commons, presented on the 12th February, in which the Committee express regret at the mistaken application of charity, in the distribution of flour and bread to the poor at a very reduced price, which too free distribution, it was feared, would have the effect of increasing the inconvenience of the deficiency in the past year's crop. In the same year there was a Committee of the House, before which Mr. Claude Scott, a corn-merchant, was examined. The following was the opinion of that gentleman:—

"I think generally the supply will be moderate; the crops in general abroad have not been very productive, and in some parts, where we usually look for supplies, the exportation has lately been prohibited—I mean the Prussian provinces bordering on the Elbe. Our principal sources of supply may be looked for this year from the Baltic, and chiefly from Poland; for the produce of the harvest in the Prussian provinces bordering on the Baltic has been unusually bad, and the quality very light and inferior. A considerable

quantity may be looked for from Poland, if there is no obstruction to its passage to the shipping ports. I have no means of judging the precise quantity from that part, but I hope it will be considerable, for the high prices in Great Britain will be the means of bringing all they can spare. The King of Prussia has already prohibited the export of all other grain but wheat, and it is apprehended that prohibition may be extended to wheat, particularly in the event of a further advance in the prices in Great Britain, which might create an alarm in those countries. Some quantity of wheat may also be expected fram Russia, but I have no means of ascertaining how much. The exportation of corn is strictly prohibited from Holland, Flanders, and France."

The whole of the supplies which were then conveyed to this country was at an expense of not less than 20,000,000*l*. He next begged to draw the attention of the House to an extract from a Cabinet Order of the King of Prussia, dated Sept. 12, 1801:—

"With respect to taking off the new duty on wheat, I do not see that the country can suffer from its continuance to the end of this year, as the shipments of the present calendar year cannot continue much longer; the threshing out of the wheat will not be finished before the end of the current year, and therefore the supply to the seaport towns can only begin with the month of January next year. It is the fault of the merchant himself if he has encumbered himself with a larger stock than he could send to England before the 1st of October, as he is sure of a good price to that time; and the new measure of the English Government for reducing the bounty, having occasioned an unnatural rise in the prices of the best wheats, will make up to him in price what he would otherwise have received in bounty. Under these circumstances I consider it so much the more advisable to postpone the taking off the duty on wheat till the month of December, as we shall then be able to judge with more certainty whether the report of an unusually abundant wheat harvest in England is founded or not, and regulate our measures accordingly. Should the prices in England continue to that time between 50s. and 60s. per quarter, the duty shall then be taken off; and shall only be continued in full if they rise again to 80s. to 90s.; should they in this period rise something less than this last-mentioned price, the duty can be modified accordingly."

An avowal such as this ought not to be lightly thrown aside. The Member for Durham, and others who acted with him, were of opinion that the King of Prussia had a right to do as he pleased with his corn; but he thought that the Parliament of England would do well to recollect that five-and-forty years had passed since the people of this country had been visited with famine. They had since that time been carried through strange vicissitudes, and supported mainly from the produce of that soil the decay of which they might lament when it was too late, and the hurt of which the Executive Government of the country, as if in league with the League, viewed apparently with feelings of indifference, if not altogether determined to destroy. He would pass from that question to another, on another document included in his Motion: he meant the Papers published in the United States in pursuance of an Address of the 18th July, 1828. His object in moving for those Papers was to show a most deliberate delusion, and mischievous perversion, by a person holding a situation of authority under a Government appointment. The letter for which he would first call would be the copy of a despatch from Mr. H. U. Addington to Mr. Canning, dated at Washington, on the 30th of May, 1824, and detailing in the fullest manner the conflict of feelings displayed by every description of party in the United States. Nothing could be more comprehensive than that letter, and there was the remarkable fact that neither Mr. Addington nor Sir Charles Vaughan made any particular allusion to corn as being mentioned in it, but spoke of the articles alluded to as Swedish iron, hammered iron, and bar iron, corn having been in fact hardly ever mentioned. The concluding paragraph of Mr. Addington's letter was as follows:—

"I have only to add, that had no restrictions on the importations of foreign grain existed in Europe generally, and especially in Great Britain, I have little doubt that the Tariff would never have passed through either house of Congress, since the great agricultural States, and Pennsylvania especially, the main mover of the question, would have been indifferent, if not opposed to its enactment."

Such was the version of Mr. Addington—now take the construction of Mr. Chapman, "That our Corn Laws were an apology for the hostile tariffs of other nations required no proof." ["Hear!"] Hon. Members cried "hear." Let them "hear" by all means. Mr. Chapman added, that it would suffice to allude to the note written by the British Minister at Washington (Mr. Addington), to Mr. Canning, in which he had said that he had only to add, that if no restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn had existed in Great Britain, the Tariff would never have passed through either house of Congress, since the agricultural States, and especially Pennsylvania, would have been indifferent, if not opposed to it—thus erasing from the passage all that had reference to other parts of Europe, except Great Britain, and all that had to do with other articles of commerce, and opinion, except corn, and leaving the extract to stand in that posi-

tion as if the entire allusion had been to this country alone. He (Mr. Wodehouse) had a conversation with the late Sir Charles Bagot on the subject, and another with Sir Stratford Canning. He had the honour of having had many communications also with that distinguished diplomatist, Lord Heytesbury—never had the honour to have one with Lord Clarendon. He believed, however, that all would concur in the feeling that there never was a stratagem more unworthy of any man who held the station of a gentleman. He would next call the attention of the House to matters that had taken place before the Import Duties Committee, in 1840. The Chairman of the Committee, the Member for Montrose, appeared, during the whole time it was sitting, to have been brewing his celebrated peroration to the Report. The hon. Member having read the peroration, in which the expression "the whole family of nations" occurred, observed, that a gentleman who sat with the whole family of nations in his lap might well be excused. The hon. Member proceeded to read extracts from the evidence given by Mr. Smith, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, Manchester, who had quoted from the letter of Mr. Addington, as published. But he (Mr. Wodehouse) was not aware that any publication of that letter existed, with the exception of the deliberate forgery of the commission which he had read. The hon. Member then read the resolution passed at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce in Manchester, and extracts from the proceedings, including a vote of thanks to Dr. Bowring for the active part he had taken, and the services he had rendered the cause of free trade, especially for the interesting statement he had made on the subject of the German League. The hon. Member also read the address which had been moved by Mr. Cobden, and passed, and which contained the following allusions to the letter of Mr. Addington :—

"That this meeting having heard with the deepest interest the able address just delivered by Dr. Bowring upon the subject of our commercial relations with the States comprising the German League, earnestly invites public attention to the incontrovertible evidence thus afforded, that the Governments and people of Germany are desirous of exchanging their productions for the commodities of this country, proving from undoubted authority that we are prevented solely by our restrictive laws from embracing the manifold advantages offered to us."

There was incontrovertible evidence that that paragraph was altogether false, and the right hon. Baronet blamed them for not backing up these Gentlemen who used it as if it were true. The hon. Member for Bolton (Dr. Bowring) had written upon the same subject to Lord Palmerston. That hon. Gentleman had played a distinguished part in Egypt; but he (Mr. Wodehouse) had received information upon that subject, as to the appearance of the hon. Gentleman when there. The interpreter could hardly keep from laughing. He had the information from a source on which he could implicitly rely. It was from a friend—from a particular friend—a person on whom reliance could be placed. The friend was a lady—a married lady. She was not an actual eye-witness, so there could be no doubt of the authenticity of the information; and she assured him (Mr. Wodehouse) that those who saw the learned Gentleman now in every-day life beheld him shorn of his beams. If hon. Gentlemen had only seen him as she saw him, with a large straw hat, nearly as big as the clerk's table, a full flowing beard and moustaches; and—for the best was yet to come — with a pair of wide Circassian trousers— The hon. Member begged to add one word more in reference to the opinion of Dr. Harding, to whom was committed the examination into the state of the hand-loom weavers in the east of Scotland. Dr. Harding expressed himself thus :—

"The only remedy universally, and often exclusively, suggested by the weavers and their employers, is the gradual, but ultimately total, repeal of the present Corn Laws. I have already stated the means by which it is supposed that their operation is peculiarly injurious to the hand-loom weavers; but it by no means follows that their repeal would be as beneficial as their enactment is supposed to have been injurious. Notwithstanding the excitement and the prejudices existing amongst the weavers on this subject (which are not a little encouraged and fostered by its political bearing, and the efforts of itinerant orators), the most intelligent are aware that if such repeal should have a very injurious effect on the agricultural interest, this effect will ultimately be felt by themselves; and it is from a great increase of the demand for textile manufactures on the part of those countries which, in the event of such repeal, would supply us with corn, that they expect a certain and considerable gain. How far any such increased demand might be checked by the commercial regulations of foreign Governments, influenced by a desire of what is called 'protecting' their own manufactures from British competition—how far the repeal of these laws might affect the value of money, or the prosperity of other classes of the community, under existing circumstances, it must, of course, be for the wisdom of the Legislature to consider."

He did not wish to occupy the time of the House, and he would, therefore, at once conclude by moving for the Papers.

Dr. BOWRING said, that as the hon. Gentleman had distinguished him by his personal allusions, the House would allow him to say a few words. And, first, he would assure the hon. Member that the lady whom he had quoted had—no doubt with that knowledge of character for which ladies are remarkable—drawn very largely upon his credulity, and amused him with an oriental tale. That tale he seemed eagerly to have believed, and its romantic parts the more readily. Now, he would tell the hon. Gentleman what was true in the story—and it was true that he had discussed the subject of the Corn Laws with the Pacha of Egypt. It was true that the Pacha had defended his corn laws with as much, perhaps more, talent than the hon. Gentleman had exhibited in the maintenance of his own. Mahomet Ali fancied that he could regulate prices by legislation—provide food for his people by restrictions—and advantageously interfere between demand and supply by his own sovereign will. But he failed as others have failed. While residing at Cairo, with a commercial commission from the British Government, strong representations were made to him (Dr. Bowring) on the subject of the Pacha's decrees, which ordered that corn, beans, and bread, should be sold only on such and such terms. But neither farmers nor bakers would obey—the bazaars were left without grain—the shops had no supplies of bread—the more rigid and severe the ordinances for lowering prices, the higher those prices mounted. Famine menaced the city—the people were on the verge of insurrection. In such a state he had undertaken to be the organ of the public voice to the ruler of Egypt, and to represent to him, that however benevolent his intentions, his decrees were fearfully augmenting the alarm and the misery, and would infallibly lead to extensive and enduring distress. He told the Pacha that the causes which led to the rise and fall of prices were, for the most part, beyond the control even of the mightiest monarch, and that the only way to secure ample supplies at moderate rates was to remove all impediments to the ingress and egress of food; that prices would best regulate themselves; and that by allowing them to mount upwards was the certain means of bringing corn to the market. And it was his good fortune to persuade the Pacha of the correctness of these opinions, and to induce him to withdraw the decrees which interfered with the freedom of the trade in grain. The consequences were what he had ventured to foretell. Abundance succeeded to dearth—an ample supply poured into the markets, and the Pacha acknowledged that the advice proffered to him had been sound and wise. The hon. Member had referred somewhat disparagingly to his reports on our commercial relations with the north of Europe. They stated, what he (Dr. Bowring) now repeated, that had our Government been willing and able to repeal the Corn Laws some years ago, important advantages might have been obtained for our manufactures in the markets of Germany. But nothing would then persuade the hon. Gentleman and his friends to make any such concessions, and the opportunity was lost. The Ministry of that day, whatever their wishes might have been, was altogether helpless in the matter; Parliament would not place in their hands the power to treat for any advantages which were to be purchased by the more free admission of foreign corn. Could this have been done, a vast field would have been opened to British industry. It was closed against us by the pertinacity of the protectionist party. But a better era had arrived. He offered his humble but most hearty thanks to the right hon. Baronet, for having adopted wiser and better views. He had placed the question on more sound and solid ground than that of seeking to convince other nations by arguments, showing that the protective system was pernicious to us and them. He said—and he (Dr. Bowring) was very grateful to him for saying it—that he was weary of those appeals to other Powers—that he was convinced our example should precede our negociations. He had thus taken away the sting from the allegations of strangers. When employed in these matters, he (Dr. Bowring) could answer many of the reasonings and many of the statistics of foreign protectionists; but he could never answer the arguments based on our own restrictive and prohibitory tariffs. If pointing out the defects and diseases of foreign commercial legislation, what could he reply to those who said "Physician! heal thyself?" Of what use was it to exhibit the blots and follies in the tariffs of others, when they were ready and able to retort upon him the greater blots and follies of our own? He looked forward now to better days. The expanse was widening. British commerce would make its way to general favour. Already from every country which had received the intelligence of the intentions of

the Government, communications of the most promising character had arrived. We should be entering on a new era of prosperity. We were occupying our true position. We were giving a noble example—and when a country like this became a teacher of commercial wisdom, she was sure to find many and apt learners.

Motion agreed to.

ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS.

Mr. BROTHERTON (for Mr. Elphinstone) having moved an Address to the Crown for a return of the gross and net Incomes (in the years 1844 and 1845) of the Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales, etc., whether arising from their archbishopries and bishopries,

Mr. J. COLLETT: The question of Bishops and Archbishops being before the House, I think that I am not out of order in rising to express my regret that the death during the recess of the late Bishop of Bath and Wells, and the appointment of his successor, have prevented my bringing this year before the House that which last Session I was so frequently under the necessity of postponing—my Bill for the consolidation of the dioceses of Bath and Wells, and of Salisbury, at the death of the present (now the late) Bishop of Bath and Wells. Now, Sir, although no doubt the right hon. Baronet would have resisted its introduction, and would, no doubt, have had a majority to support his views, still he would, I think, have had a difficulty in combating my argument, which may be put in the shortest compass possible. This performance of the duties of two sees by one bishop during the last seven years, has either been efficient and satisfactory, or inefficient and unsatisfactory. If inefficient, it was the duty of the Government to have provided a remedy, by superseding the late bishop, and appointing in his stead one more capable of properly attending to the business of the diocese; if, on the contrary, this double duty was discharged in an efficient manner—if for seven years one bishop could properly attend to this accession of business, it stands to reason, Sir, that one bishop could attend to it for seventy years, and for ever. I have, indeed, every reason to believe, not only that the Bishop of Salisbury did discharge this duty in a satisfactory manner, but that he did not feel himself at all embarrassed by the weight of it; on the contrary, he has recently assumed a new duty by taking to himself a wife, who must be looked upon as a third see or spouse of this Minister of the Church. Whatever opinion to the contrary may be entertained by others—however some may wish to have again separated the now about to be consolidated sees of St. Asaph and Bangor—however some right rev. Prelates may in another place come forward and say with the coolest assurance, "My Lords, that of which the country is at present most in need, is of a farther supply of bishops;" I, on the contrary, give it as my decided opinion that we have too many bishops already, and on my part no effort shall be wanting to reduce and consolidate these bishops, and to expose to the country the amount annually squandered on this proud, ambitious, and overpaid hierarchy. The establishment of bishops with seats in the House of Lords is, according to my ideas, the concentrated essence of all that is bad and objectionable in ecclesiastical matters. I consider that from their occupations and appointments these bishops must almost of necessity be useless and faithless to the laity and to the Crown—useless and faithless to the laity, because instead of residing in their dioceses—instead of watching over their clergy—instead of endeavouring to promote real piety, and by real piety contributing to the eternal salvation of the people—the time of these bishops is taken up in attending to politics in the House of Lords, in looking after translations for themselves, and in endeavouring to promote the private worldly and pecuniary interests of their families. I consider this bench of bishops useless and faithless to the Crown, because they are no sooner erected by the Crown, than like the monster in Frankenstein, they take the earliest opportunity of denying and setting at defiance that very power that called them into existence.

Returns ordered.

TURNPIKE TRUSTS.

Sir W. JOLLIFFE said, that as he then saw the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department in his place, he wished to put to him a question, to which the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government had been unable to give a complete and satisfactory answer. It appeared that the measure adopted in the southern part of Wales with respect to turnpike trusts had completely succeeded; and he wished to know whether it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to bring forward

during the present Session any general measure for the amendment and consolidation of the turnpike trusts of England and Wales; or whether they thought it advisable to have a further Parliamentary investigation of the subject, and to move the appointment of a Committee, who would inquire into the operation of the present laws, and the expediency or inexpediency of altering them in consequence of the recent extension of railway communication?

Sir J. GRAHAM wished to apologize to the hon. Baronet for not having been in his place at an earlier hour. He understood that during his absence his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government had assured the hon. Baronet of the success of the measure respecting turnpike trusts in South Wales. No doubt he (Sir J. Graham) had reason to hope and believe that that experiment, so far as it had yet gone, had been successful. But in answering the question put by the hon. Baronet, he felt it right to remind the House how different was the question affecting the turnpike trusts of so limited a sphere as South Wales, from the great question of the turnpike trusts of all England and Wales. In the first place, the debt constituted the great difficulty of the question. The debt in South Wales amounted to only 280,000*l.*; and under the peculiar circumstances of the case the Legislature had thought it expedient to give the aid of the public credit for the liquidation of that limited sum. A composition had been effected in that case by the equitable decisions of a Commission, by which the whole debt in the hands of private creditors had been extinguished for a sum of about 200,000*l.* Now, let them contrast that case with the condition of the turnpike trusts throughout England generally. The gross amount of the debt for turnpike trusts throughout England was a sum of no less than 9,000,000*l.* He certainly was not prepared to say that an extension to the whole of England of the experiment which had taken place in South Wales might not possibly be effected; and he believed that upon the whole a satisfactory adjustment might take place, if the public were willing to advance the necessary amount of money. But he was not prepared, on the part of the Government, to announce any proposition in the present Session upon that subject. His right hon. Friend at the head of the Government, in submitting the other evening an extensive scheme for the consideration of Parliament, had stated, on the part of the Government, that it was their intention to bring forward during the present Session an amendment of the Highway Act, and also to propose the advance of a very considerable amount for the improvement of land by thorough draining. Under these circumstances, he could not reconcile it with his sense of duty to call at present upon Parliament to advance, for the purpose of altering our system of turnpike trusts, a sum so considerable as that which he had mentioned. He did not think that any advantage would be derived from the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the state of our turnpike trusts. The House had already most ample information upon that subject, in the most authentic form, in the very able reports of various commissions. The facts of the case were notorious. It was, however, most difficult to deal with them, and the principal difficulty was the one he had mentioned—namely, the enormous amount of the outstanding debt.

THE SUGAR DUTIES.

In reply to a question from Mr. Moffat, with respect to the period when the discussion on the Sugar Duties would be taken,

Sir R. PEEL said, the hon. Gentleman was aware that the Sugar Duties were granted by an annual vote of Parliament; whereas the Custom Duties, to which his Motion the other night had express reference, were permanent duties. But, in taking a general view of our commercial policy, although he intended to reserve a discussion on the Sugar Duties until the Bill relating to them should he brought forward, he had thought it right to intimate the intentions of Her Majesty's Government with respect to those duties. The Sugar Duties were not included in the Tariff, because it referred to permanent duties only.

Mr. MOFFAT wished to know whether the discussion on the Sugar Duties would be taken at an advanced period of the Session, according to the usual practice, or would be taken at a very early period, as had been the case last Session?

Lord J. RUSSELL said, that, before the right hon. Gentleman answered that question, he wished to remind him that a discussion on the Sugar Duties would raise two important questions. The first of these questions related to the amount of differential duties; and the second related to the subject of free-labour sugar and all other foreign sugars, which had been frequently discussed in that House. Those

two questions would be raised when the Sugar Duties came under discussion; and although he did not wish to ask the right hon. Gentleman to bring forward the subject either on an early day or a late day, he begged of him to consider what course it would be most conducive to the public interest that he should adopt on the matter.

Sir R. PEEL should have no objection to bring forward the Sugar Duties on an early day after the measures to which he had called the particular attention of the House had been disposed of. He thought that as far as the Government business was concerned those measures were entitled to precedence, and until they had been disposed of he would not take the sense of Parliament upon the Sugar Duties. He had been aware of the inconvenience that would necessarily arise from a reference to the Sugar Duties sometime before the sense of Parliament could be taken upon the subject. But he had been convinced that he would have been asked what were the intentions of Her Majesty's Government upon that question; and he had felt that to have declined to give an answer, or to have given an equivocal answer, would have subjected the trade to greater embarrassment than any to which it could otherwise have been exposed.

REPRESENTATION OF DORSETSHIRE.

Mr. W. MILES said, he had heard that a noble Lord (Lord Ashley), one of the Members for Dorsetshire, and another hon. Gentleman, had accepted office under the Crown. He wished to know whether these rumours were well founded; and if so, whether new writs were about to be issued?

Sir R. PEEL said, it was perfectly true that the noble Lord and the hon. Gentleman to whom the hon. Member referred had accepted office under the Crown; but that office was the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds. (*Laughter.*)

Mr. W. MILES wished to know whether it was the intention of the right hon. Baronet to move for new writs in the room of the noble Lord and of the hon. Gentleman? If that were not his intention, he begged leave himself to move for a new writ for Dorsetshire.

Sir R. PEEL said, that before the Motion for a new writ could be made, certain forms must be gone through. These forms had not yet been complied with. The moment they had been through, he would make the fact known to the hon. Member.

Subject at an end.

CHARITABLE TRUSTS.

Mr. TRELAWNY wished to know whether it were the intention of Her Majesty's Government to bring forward any measure during the present Session on the subject of Charitable Trusts?

Sir J. GRAHAM said, that his noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor would, at an early period, bring forward a Bill in the other House for the Regulation of Charitable Trusts.

House adjourned at six o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Wednesday, February 4, 1846.

Minutes.] Petitions Presented. From Inverness and Brighton, for Repeal, and from Sussex, against Alteration, of the Corn Laws.—From Enfield and Fleetwood, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From Chairman of the Board of Guardians of the Nenagh Union, for the Adoption of Measures for the Employment of the People of Ireland.

EMPLOYMENT OF PAUPERS.

Captain PECHELL said, that it was now nearly eight years since he placed before the notice of the House the case of a labouring man in the Eastbourne Union, in Sussex, who had been brought to death's door by the system of labour to which the paupers were subjected in that workhouse. At the time, he was met by very unjust and very severe observations on the part of those who chose to defend the system of crushing bones in the various workhouses. Every year since that time he had endeavoured to press the matter on the attention of Government; and at length, he was happy to say, the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department had entered into the feelings of those who had brought that monstrous abuse, the practice of bone-crushing, before the House. The House was well aware, that during the last two Sessions the right hon. Baronet did state, on several occasions, that he highly disapproved of that practice, either by way of punishment or as a mode of useful employment. The Poor Law Commissioners, however, appeared to have thwarted the intentions of the Secretary of State; and, notwithstanding the fact that much pains were taken to promulgate the expression of his opinion regarding the practice, still every means was used to continue it throughout the country. Last Session, he moved for a Return of the number of Union Workhouses in which the paupers were employed in the abominable system of crushing or pounding bones, and

describing by name the chairman and vice-chairman of every Union where the practice existed. From that Return, it appeared that there were nearly two hundred workhouses in which that intolerable nuisance and cruelty were encouraged. The Unions, in fact, set the Secretary of State at defiance, and the Poor Law Commissioners seemed to encourage them. At last came the gross case in the Andover Union, when the right hon. Baronet expressed himself in the most proper and feeling manner in respect to it, and subsequently instituted an inquiry into the case, and directed an assistant Poor Law Commissioner to investigate the charges against the authorities at Andover. He should be very glad if the report of that inquiry were furnished to the House. However, they were given to understand, through the public sources of information, that an order had been issued by the Commissioners for the purpose of putting an end to the practice of crushing and grinding bones in the workhouses; and it was also rumoured that several boards of guardians who had been most prominent in defence of the system, had since remonstrated with the Poor Law Commissioners, and had made such representations as had caused them to suspend the execution of the order in question. That suspension was requested upon the principle that the various boards had a large stock of bones still on hand, which they wished to get rid of, as he supposed, on the same plan as that by which they were to abolish the sliding scale. He hoped, however, that the right hon. Baronet would follow up his noble exertions, and expose those persons who continued to encourage the practice, and made every effort to evade the rules and regulations which he had laid down for them. The persons to whom he alluded brought arguments on both sides to defend the practice; they brought doctors forward to favour their views, who stated, that as the bones were ground in a different room from that in which the paupers were employed, the mill, in fact, being worked by a crank, that, for all the paupers could tell, it might be corn—free-trade corn, he hoped—which they were grinding; but it had been shown to the House that it was necessary that some of the paupers should be employed in selecting and paring the bones, as well as in regulating the mills; and with regard to them, at least, it was not true that they were not liable to all the stench and misery attendant on the practice. In the Committee on the Gilbert Union, full evidence had been given of the effects of that practice on the health of the paupers; and it was proved that the fetidness of the air of those mills was such, that it caused the greatest pain to those near them, as well as a strong desire to leave such a horrible scene. He was only anxious that the right hon. Baronet should be able to state before the House that he was determined to put an end to the practice. It was true he (Sir J. Graham) had already assured the House that he wished to do so, but at the same time expressed a doubt whether the Poor Law Commissioners had sufficient power to prevent the board of guardians from employing the paupers as they thought fit. It was also said, that crushed bones were required to enable the landlords to compete with guano. He (Captain Pechell), therefore, had asked the right hon. Baronet to legislate upon the subject; and the House was now informed that, in some of those Unions, a suspended order had been issued, abolishing the practice, which was to come into operation on the 1st of April next. He hoped the right hon. Baronet would suspend the suspending order, and make those boards get rid of their accumulated stock of bones in some other way than by sacrificing the health of the paupers. There must, undoubtedly, be some men engaged in chopping and selecting the bones; and although the number of persons so employed might be reduced, still it was absolutely necessary that the filthy practice should be abolished; and he hoped that the right hon. Baronet would speedily complete the humane work he had undertaken, and put an end to it throughout the country. The hon. and gallant Gentleman concluded by moving for a copy of any letter and general rule issued by the Poor Law Commissioners, relative to the employment of paupers in pounding, grinding, or otherwise breaking bones, or in preparing bone dust; to which he begged leave to add, any copy of letter from any board of guardians remonstrating against the general rule, and requesting a suspension of the new order.

Sir J. GRAHAM said, he was not by any means disposed to offer any opposition to the Return for which the hon. and gallant Officer had just moved. It was quite true that from a very early period his opinions quite concurred with those of the hon. and gallant Officer, and that he considered the particular mode of employment under consideration as inexpedient, because it was of a degrading nature, and had

more of a penal character than became the operations of a workhouse. Until the Andover case was brought under the cognizance of the House, he certainly entertained the opinion that the Poor Law Commissioners had no power to force the boards of guardians to alter the practice; but, owing to that case, he had directed his attention more earnestly and particularly to that subject, and the result of that investigation was, that he found that the Poor Law Commissoners had the power to interfere by the issue of a general order. He had therefore pressed upon the Commissioners the expediency of issuing such an order, and already, in pursuance of his request, that order, which was on the Table of the House, had been issued. The hon. and gallant Officer was correct in stating that the occupation had unfortunately become very general in the workhouses throughout England, for it appeared that it had been adopted in upwards of 150 out of about 500 Unions. Out of that large number, he thought about nine Unions had applied for the suspension of the order for a short time, in order to adapt the machinery of their mills to other uses, and in each case of such application he had called for a general detail of all the circumstances whereupon it was grounded. On considering the circumstances, he had in nine cases consented to suspend the operation of the order for three months from the 1st of January last. He was perfectly willing to present the Papers for which the hon. and gallant Officer had moved; and he thought that the fact of there being only nine cases out of 150 wherein the suspension of the order was required, showed a great alteration in the mode of workhouse employment. After the 1st of April bone-crushing would no longer be legal, and he hoped that the hon. and gallant Member would be satisfied with that assurance and the explanation he had given him.

Mr. ETWALL said, that as he intended to bring forward a Motion on the subject of the Andover case, he would not then trouble the House; but he wished to ask the right hon. Baronet if the Andover Union was included among those which had remonstrated against the order. [Sir J. Graham could not give a positive answer to the hon. Member.] He wished to state that the inquiry which had been instituted into the conduct of the authorities of Andover workhouse was not considered by the public as a satisfactory investigation into the facts of the case. There were no mills at Andover, and consequently the smell was much more nauseous to those engaged in crushing and pounding them. When the assistant Poor Law Commissioner went down, he waited on Mr. Munday, who first brought the subject before the authorities, and took his examination and that of a man in his employment, who had been in the workhouse during the preceding winter; but on leaving he said he could not specify the day on which he would make his examination in detail. No public notice of any sort had been given to the guardians, and where ten paupers had been examined on the investigation, only one had given evidence before the Assistant Commissioner. The inquiry had been neither full nor satisfactory.

Mr. CHRISTIE asked if there would be any objection on the part of Government to produce the letters of Mr. Chadwick, and the remonstrances which, it was said, Mr. Parker had used on the occasion; and stated that he intended to move an Amendment to the Motion of the hon. Member for Andover, for the purpose of extending the inquiry which he proposed to institute.

Sir J. GRAHAM replied, that he could not answer the question of the hon. Member, as he had not given him (Sir J. Graham) any notice of his intention to put it.

Captain PECHELL remarked, that it was believed there was a difference of opinion at Somerset House as to the power of the Commissioners to interfere with the boards of guardians, and in that belief he concurred. It was said that Mr. Chadwick thought the Commissioners had the power, and Mr. Lewis and his colleagues were of an opposite opinion. He was sure the right hon. Baronet had been informed that no power did exist to control the proceedings of the boards as to the employment of the paupers. The acquiescence of the Secretary of State to produce the Papers for which he had moved, gave him very great satisfaction; and he hoped he would consent to add to them a return of all the bones on hand in the various workhouses, the quantity purchased, and the time at which the purchase had been made; for it might appear that at the time when they were bought, the Tariff had been passed, under which a reduction of the duty on bones had been made.

Motion agreed to.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH FISHERIES.

Captain PECHELL moved, pursuant to notice, for copies of the communications

which had been made to the Board of Trade and the Commissioners of Customs relative to the instructions to be issued to the naval authorities respecting the Convention between this country and France, and with respect to the examination of French fishing vessels. Now, from what appeared in the French newspapers, it would seem that remonstrances had been made by the French Government to the British Government on this subject, and that the latter had yielded the point sought for. Now, by the 13th Article of the Convention between the two countries, the fishermen of both countries were ordered, when required to do so by the respective authorities, to present their licenses for examination. It was stated in the newspapers that the Board of Trade had issued instructions relative to the construction or interpretation of this 13th Article, and directing that no fishing vessels were to be examined unless there were grounds for suspecting them. It appeared to him that there was a giving way on the part of our own Government on this question. He knew an instance where some French fishermen had come in the night, and drew the fishing stations of the English fishermen, to their great injury and loss. He did not see any Lord of the Admiralty present, or he would ask him a question relative to this subject, or whether any instructions had been sent from that department. He hoped the right hon. Baronet opposite would furnish them with any copies of instructions furnished by the Admiralty, so that the House might know exactly how the case stood.

Sir G. CLERK had no objection to the production of the documents to which the hon. and gallant Member opposite referred. He believed the hon. and gallant Gentleman had correctly stated the case. The fact was that complaints had been made by the fishermen of both nations of their boats having been examined by the cruisers of both countries; and upon a communication taking place between the Governments of France and England, it had been thought better to confine the cases of search or visit to such fishing boats as might be suspected of violation of the terms of the Convention. This regulation was as good for the fishermen of one nation as another, and both French and English boats were convenienced by being preserved from the system. He could inform the hon. and gallant Member that a copy of the letter sent to the Customs had also been sent to the Admiralty, for its guidance and information. With regard to the return of the number of French and English boats which had been detained from time to time under the Convention, he could inform the hon. and gallant Captain it was in course of preparation, and would be presented in a few days.

Captain PECHELL said the French Government had not yet passed any law to carry into effect the rules and regulations agreed on by the Convention. In consequence of the imperfect lettering, numbering, marking, and naming of their boats, it was difficult to identify any of them which might have been concerned in any aggression on a dark night.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVILEGE—INTERPOLATED PETITIONS.

Mr. GISBORNE then said, he had a petition to present to the House of rather a particular character, and it complained of what, if true, involved a gross violation of the privileges of that House. The allegations contained in the petition were to the following effect, viz. — that on last Monday night a petition had been presented to the House, purporting to be the petition of one Edmond Carter, saying, that in the case of the Manchester and Southampton Railway Bill the Standing Orders had not been complied with, and that this petition was an interpolated one, and now lay in that state on the Table of the House amongst its Printed Papers. He had, therefore, to move that the petition he then presented, should be printed and referred to a Select Committee to investigate the allegations therein made.

Motion agreed to.

COURTS OF REQUEST.

Mr. KEMBLE begged to ask whether it was the intention of the Government to extend the jurisdiction of Courts of Request, in accordance with the provisions of the Bill of last year?

Sir J. GRAHAM was glad the hon. Member had, by his question, given him an opportunity of explaining what were the intentions of Her Majesty's Government in this respect. Since the passing of the law of last Session, several petitions had been presented from various places asking for an extension of the jurisdiction of such courts under the Act in question; and these petitions had been referred to a Committee of the Privy Council; and instructions had been sent to all the Courts

of Request throughout England, to make the inquiries necessary to enable the Government to carry the law into effect, and extend the jurisdiction of such courts. But the care necessary to be observed in forming the larger circles for the operation of these courts, so as not to interfere with any smaller ones that might intervene, rendered the time for carrying the law into effect a little more prolonged than otherwise. But no time had been lost, and the arrangement of the whole plan was in progress. Meantime he should feel it his duty to call upon the House to grant him a Supplemental Bill during the present Session to regulate the proceedings in those courts. It would be also the care of the Government to see that assessors, properly qualified, and professional men of competent standing, should be engaged in the practice of these courts.

Mr. HAWES asked, whether the right hon. Baronet proposed to lay on the Table any Papers of information upon which the Government might have relied in carrying out the proposed plan; and also whether the applications for the extension of jurisdiction alluded to would be produced, or the grounds upon which they were made stated?

Sir J. GRAHAM said, the hon. Gentleman must be aware, that, even without any such applications, the Bill of last Session empowered an extension of the jurisdiction of these Courts of Request, where it might be deemed expedient and advisable. When the Privy Council had made their Report to Her Majesty, and Her Majesty had sanctioned that Report, he should be prepared to bring the entire subject before Parliament.

Adjourned at a few minutes after two o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, February 5, 1846.

Minutes.] Public Bills.—1ª. Game Laws; Public Works (Ireland).

Petitions Presented. From Owners and Occupiers of Land, and others, of Tannington, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.—From Chairman and Board of Guardians of the Nenagh Union, and several other places, for Protection to the Agricultural Interest.

RELIEF OF THE POOR IN IRELAND.

The Earl of CLANCARTY said: My Lords, in rising to move for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the working of the laws relating to the relief of the destitute and of the sick poor of Ireland, with a view to their being amended and rendered efficient for their purposes, I feel that the conduct of such an inquiry, embracing, as it must, the consideration of important principles, and of details scarcely less important, in reference to measures of very deep interest to the well-being of the Irish people, might better have devolved upon some one having the authority of official connexion with the Government of the country. When I, last Session, intimated the intention, which I am this evening to fulfil, of bringing forward this Motion, I at the same time expressed a hope that the duty—for such it is—would have been taken off my hands by some noble Lord more competent to perform it; and considering that my noble Friend (Lord Clanricarde), who, in 1843, moved for a Committee of Inquiry into the working of the Poor Law, as it then stood, and subsequently in the discussion upon the Amendment Act, which is now in operation, intimated an intention of renewing his Motion for inquiry—considering that he was, upon these accounts, as well as from the abilities he could bring to the task, the fittest person to carry such an inquiry to a satisfactory result, I requested him to undertake it. My noble Friend, however, having declined, it only remains for me to request your Lordships' indulgent attention, while I set forth as briefly as the subject will admit of the circumstances that warrant me in calling upon your Lordships to grant me the Committee, and the objects which it appears to me may be obtained from it. Looking, my Lords, at the actual condition of Ireland—the almost daily accounts of agrarian outrages and murders which are perpetrated, for the most part, in connection with a systematic resistance to the rights of property, and considering that this state of things, though referable, no doubt, to many other causes, is aggravated by an amount of suffering and destitution among the lower orders of the Irish people, that might almost alone account for it, but which is certainly an obstruction to the progress of civilisation and national improvement, it appears to me that an inquiry into the operation of any laws affecting the condition of the poor, and designed for their benefit, but which, from any concurrence of testimony, appear to be productive of discontent, and to have failed of fulfilling the purposes of the Legislature, would be at the present time of great value, as well as upon other accounts most desirable.

The subjects to which I am to call your Lordships' attention are strictly of this description—I mean the Irish Poor Law and medical charities—institutions which have lamentably failed of accomplishing the good designed by them. The Poor Law, efficient for its purposes, should be a relief, not to the destitute alone, but to those above destitution, and should exercise a beneficial influence over the whole social condition of the community. The medical charities, duly supported, impartially distributed, and under proper regulation, might save from ruin and suffering numbers who, now the victims of neglect, are compelled by physical debility to seek in the poor house a refuge among the destitute. The state of the law with respect to the medical relief of the poor, and the practice under it, would alone have induced me to come before your Lordships, even if it were not connected, as it is, with the more important question to which I shall presently call your attention. I need but refer your Lordships to the reports that are upon the Table, to show the necessity there exists for legislation on the subject of medical relief. Your Lordships have also before you the Report of a Committee of the House of Commons, which was laboriously engaged in 1843, for several weeks, with the consideration of this important subject. My noble Friend (Lord St. Germans), at that time a Member of the other House, and who served upon that Committee, will set me right if I should be in error in saying that that Committee were perfectly unanimous as to the necessity of legislation; but, unfortunately, they could neither agree upon the particular measure that had been referred to them, nor in the recommendation of any other. They separated, as it too often happens with an Irish jury empannelled to try an indictment for murder; they could not agree, and were, in consequence, discharged without having returned any verdict. The case is, therefore, again for trial, and I trust that, should a Committee of your Lordships be appointed to deal with it, your labours may be attended with a more satisfactory result. As the law now stands, it is the occasion of much suffering and injustice to the poor of Ireland, and a serious aggravation of the difficulties of the Poor Law, by the quantity of destitution it creates, and of sickness, disease, and infection it causes to be sent into the workhouses. A reference to Poor Law statistics will show that, from having been designed as mere receptacles for the destitute, the workhouses have practically become hospitals for the treatment of chronic and other disorders, and boarding-schools for the children of those who are afflicted with them. It is necessary promptly to deal with this question; and the object of the Committee in reference to it should be, as I conceive, not to make any new exposure of abuses, which none deny, and for which none can be made responsible; but, from the evidence and opinions of those who are possessed of the best practical information, to determine and report upon the alterations and amendments of the law the most likely to prove permanent and satisfactory. As most of your Lordships must necessarily be uninformed upon the subject, I will, with your permission, give you a short sketch of the provisions at present by law made for the sick poor of Ireland. There are at present three kinds of institutions for giving medical relief—viz., infirmaries, fever hospitals, and dispensaries. The infirmaries, supported by county assessment, with the aid of private donations, qualifying the donors to act as governors, and of annual Parliamentary grants, of 100*l.* late Irish currency to each, under an Act of the Irish Parliament, are in general useful institutions, beneficial to a distance of ten or twelve miles within the counties to which they respectively belong, but beyond that circle of no use whatever: so that above two-thirds of the population taxed for their support can derive no benefit whatever from them. The fever hospitals, sometimes supported wholly by county presentments, but most commonly by private subscriptions, to which double the amount is added by the county, are not, as the returns show, available to the public beyond a radius of about five miles, and are so few, and capriciously located, that to most of the taxpayers they can only be known as an item of expense. Nevertheless, such is the importance of making provision for fever patients, that where private subscriptions cannot be obtained to originate such establishments, boards of guardians have availed themselves of a clause introduced into the Irish Poor Law Amendment Act, to build district fever hospitals, chargeable exclusively upon the poor rates of the Union—a charge, however, which does not exempt the ratepayers from likewise having to pay for the county fever hospitals, which are of no use to them whatever. With respect to dispensaries supported by the voluntary contributions of subscribers, with an equal sum

raised off the counties, their usefulness, like that of the fever hospitals, rarely extends beyond an area or circle of five miles all around. Many of them are admirably conducted institutions, in the highest degree beneficial to the poor, and creditable to those by whom they are conducted. Others, on the contrary, for want of efficient inspection and control, are so ill administered as to render the charity of little use to any, and to leave the poor around it no better off than the major part of the population, who, though equally taxed, are wholly unprovided with medical relief of any kind. Such, my Lords, is the present unsatisfactory state of the medical charities of Ireland, for which a legislative remedy is required. Without wishing your Lordships to prejudge the question, I trust I may be permitted to show that its solution is not one of great difficulty. In fact, prejudices that once obstructed its settlement, I believe, do not now exist, or at least have no need to be called into conflict. If a more efficient system would cost rather more, it is to be observed that a better economy would make the same sum go farther; and that any additional expense would, probably, be more than made up by the contributions of those who, in the contemplation of the law, ought to contribute to it, but do not—by making all, in fact, pay in due proportion, according to the value at which their properties are respectively rated to the relief of the poor. The poor rate is, therefore, the resource from whence to draw the funds for the future support of the medical charities; it is the most equitable in the distribution of the burden, and the most analogous to the design of the existing laws. This point being settled, the next matter to be provided for is a proper distribution of medical relief; and for this purpose the Poor Law Union and the electoral divisions, in which already something of local self-government has grown up, present peculiar facilities. Regard being had, as much as possible, to maintaining existing dispensaries, particularly where they are well conducted, it appears to me that, for dispensary and fever hospital relief—the efficient application of which is rarely, if ever, operative beyond the same extent of area—the Poor Law Unions might be divided into districts, consisting of one or more electoral divisions, according to population and extent, which should be made chargeable with the entire expense of the medical relief there provided. The addition of a small hospital to every dispensary, instead of the present county fever hospitals, would be a measure of great utility. At present, when a fever breaks out, for the want of such institutions the patients are treated in their cabins, where infection spreads, recovery is slow, and the doctor can give but imperfect attendance. By having a fever hospital within reach, to which the patient can be at once removed, recovery is hastened, the spread of infection is checked, and the valuable time of a professional man is saved. Such hospitals would thus certainly be numerous, but not more than are necessary; they would supersede the necessity of maintaining the county fever hospitals. No extra expense would be occasioned by them, beyond the renting of the most ordinary dwelling, while a most invaluable saving would arise from the diminution of disease. Provision being thus made for fever and ordinary dispensary cases, within a reasonable distance of every poor man, it remains to be considered how infirmary relief should be distributed; and here, again, the Poor Law affords a solution of the question. The evidence of medical men, confirmed by statistical returns, show that these institutions are very beneficial within a radius of ten or twelve miles, but not at all so beyond it. Now, ten miles is about the average distance of the centre of any Poor Law Union, from its boundary; the most central towns, therefore, in Poor Law Unions would be the proper places for the establishment of infirmaries, the accommodation of such hospitals being always in proportion to the population. Now, with respect to providing the requisite buildings: there are, at present, thirty-five Poor Law Unions supplied with infirmaries, built at the general expense of the counties for which they were respectively established. I would propose that they should be handed over to the exclusive use of the Unions in which they are severally situated, and be supported, as to the establishment expenses, henceforth solely out of the poor rates of these districts; and as the annual Parliamentary grants (amounting in all to 3,172*l.*), which are at present given in aid of the surgeons' salaries, could not in fairness be continued in those Unions, while the others had no such assistance, I would suggest that, in lieu of that annual sum, a single grant should be made of 90,000*l.* or 100,000*l.*, as a fund in aid of building infirmaries in the Unions at present unprovided with them. I think what I have suggested would place the Poor Law dis-

tricts in general substantially upon an equality as to infirmary accommodation, and render complete and satisfactory the distribution of medical institutions. For the local government of dispensaries, I would constitute the twenty highest ratepayers of the district—associated with as many other persons as by a donation of 20*l.*, or an annual subscription of 2*l.*, desired to assist in the administration of the charity—a board with the same duties to perform as now attach to dispensary boards. To these I would confide the duty of electing the medical officer of inspection, of checking and superintending the fiscal business, and of recommending fit objects for medical relief. The highest ratepayers are, for the most part, the landlords—those who now are, in virtue of their voluntary contributions, governors of dispensaries; and there appears to be no reason for making any alteration of the law in this respect, because their contributions, now voluntary, will henceforth be made compulsory. None could have a greater interest in the welfare of the poor than their landlord—to none is it more important that cases of ill health among a tenantry should be known than to their landlord—and none could have a more obvious interest in the economical management of the charity than the highest ratepayers. For the government of the Union infirmaries, the establishment and expenses of which should be upon the Union at large, the board of guardians, as representing the property of the Union, would be the proper body; their duty might be to inspect, to check the accounts, and to elect the medical officers; but as no case which could be dealt with at a dispensary should be sent to an infirmary, patients should only be admitted on the recommendation of a dispensary doctor, and always with a full written statement of the nature of the case. The interim treatment of difficult medical or surgical cases at an institution where the medical men of the Union could meet and consult, would be at once advantageous to the patients, and tend to the promotion of medical science. The support of patients should be borne either by themselves, if in circumstances to afford it, or by the divisions of the Union to which they respectively belong, where the case might be duly certified to be that of a very poor man. For the general superintendence of all medical charities, for the confirming, or, for cause stated, negativing the appointment of medical officers of the several institutions—for laying down regulations with respect to their particular duties—for inspection—for audit of medical accounts—for communicating and advising with the local boards, and for reporting annually, and as occasion may require, to the Government, I cannot conceive any more fitting body than the General Board of Health of Ireland. I know nothing of the constitution of the existing Board; but very certain I am, that, in so densely populated a country as Ireland, periodically visited with epidemic diseases, and whose sanatory condition should, at all times, be a subject of interest to the Government, such a board, to be of any real service, should have the superintendence of every public institution for affording medical relief. I do not see any necessity for, and I do see some objection against, casting this duty upon the Poor Law Commissioners. A certain scale of salaries once laid down for the medical officers, the economy of a medical institution could by none be so well understood as by medical men—their audit, therefore, of the accounts after they had been previously passed by the local boards, should be sufficient to justify their being included among the charges payable out of the poor rates. I have now, my Lords, without entering into any minute details, stated the outline of what would afford a complete remedy for the present defective state of the medical charities. The plan I have suggested is analogous to that which the law at present contemplates; for the charge is borne equally by the owner and occupier of the soil; and the local boards for governing the institutions would probably include all who at present interest themselves—as well as all who, in the contemplation of the existing laws, ought to assist in these charities. That which is further provided for, is distribution, inspection, central control, the advancement of medical science, and the union of the whole system with the Government of the country. Doubtless when the opinions of others have been heard, who, like myself, take a strong view of the evils and abuses to be corrected, and of the good that may be effected, other plans will be proposed—if not more eligible, certainly, from the quarters from whence they may come, better deserving of consideration. That the inquiry will be perfectly impartial, I can have no doubt; and seeing how important it may be in its results, both with reference to the domestic happiness and physical condition of the industrious poor, and with

reference also to the respectability of the medical profession, and the advancement of medical science, I trust that such noble Lords as may be appointed to serve upon the Committee, will not grudge giving the time and attention so necessary to elucidate facts and opinions so as to lay in their report the foundation of a permanent good. I have omitted all notice of lunatic asylums, as they are under a different law, and the interests of the lunatic poor are under much more able advocacy—that of the noble Lord opposite (Lord Monteagle). I do not concur in all that the noble Lord would recommend upon the subject; but I cordially join in that tribute of gratitude and respect which is due to the noble Lord for the reforms he has effected in the treatment of that unfortunate class; for having, in fact, rendered our asylums for the lunatic poor institutions of which, though yet capable of improvement, we have nationally no cause to be ashamed. In calling your Lordships' attention now to the Poor Law, I have much satisfaction in stating that, unpopular as it in general is, and strongly as disapprobation has been expressed against it in Ireland, there does not exist, that I can discover, any factious or reckless disposition to get rid of it. I have sought for and received from all parts of Ireland communications both public and private, containing suggestions, made with a view to its amendment, and many of them of great value, but none for its repeal. And, further, in confirmation of this important fact, I hold in my hand a statement, drawn up by the gentleman who acted as secretary at a large and influential meeting of landed proprietors and others, in the city of Dublin, under the presidency of the Duke of Leinster, in 1843, from which it appears that in seeking for a Parliamentary inquiry into the working of the Poor Law, they were willing and desirous, without calling its principle in question, to lend their aid in devising the means of rendering it efficient for its purposes. It will, therefore, not be necessary in that inquiry which I now, as I then did, think should precede legislative amendment, to question the principle of the Act, to which, in fact, the country is now fully committed. One word, however, I would wish to take the present opportunity of saying, in reference to some adverse opinions that are not unfrequently expressed upon Poor Law legislation, which, wherever they harbour, must preclude the idea of anything being effected that could be satisfactory. The enactment of the Poor Law is said to have dried up the sources of charity and benevolence, and that such must of necessity be the effect of any compulsory rate for the relief of the poor. This was referred to as a fact in the debate in 1843, by no less an authority than the Archbishop of Dublin; and he stated in corroboration of it, that the collections for the poor at churches have been materially impaired by it. I think the most rev. Prelate was wrong in the inference he drew from the circumstance. Wherever those church collections have been continued as formerly, by way of relief for the destitute, they have, no doubt, diminished in amount, in consequence of there being a better provision now made by law for such objects; but, in vindication of my Protestant fellow countrymen, I can say, from my own knowledge, that where these collections have been since directed to charitable purposes not otherwise provided for, they have rather increased than fallen off since the passing of the Poor Relief Act. Such an objection, however, I need hardly tell your Lordships, must strike at the very foundation of any legal provision for the relief of the poor; and I regret to say, that it has created in some quarters a strong prejudice, not against the Poor Law only, but also against that modification of the laws for the support of medical charities, which, in the present circumstances of Ireland, I believe can alone secure to the poorer classes the medical aid to which the Legislature has recognised their claim; I mean their being charged, as recommended in the Report of the Land Commissioners upon the Poor Rates. But, with respect to the relief of the destitute poor, I do not think that the most prejudiced person against compulsory assessments, if he dispassionately considers the cases of the orphan, the widow, the aged, and the helpless—the peculiar wants of each, and the impracticability of their being, in all cases, adequately supplied by private charity, would seriously advocate their being, on account of their destitution, made outcasts from society—mere subjects for the casual display of an almsgiving benevolence; objects, no doubt, to excite feelings of compassion, and the more painfully so, because exposed to the risk and cruel consequences of neglect. The field, my Lords, for the exercise of charity, in its ordinary acceptation, is quite wide enough without the walls of the workhouse; and so long as Christianity exists, its peculiar attribute of unostentatious liberality will always

find in Ireland, as well as here, abundant calls for its beneficial exercise, without the exhibition of a mendicant population, or debarring the State from making provision for the destitute. In a thinly populated country, indeed, where the inhabitants of any district would all be personally known to one another, and mutually dependent, as the members of one household or family, no Poor Law might be necessary; but in a country densely populated as Ireland now is, or where employment is deficient, in comparison to the numbers who have nothing but their manual labour to depend upon, or even in a country where manufactures abound, but where there is often no other direct tie between the workman and his employer than the contract to pay a stipulated sum for work done or for day's labour, in such a state of society there will be, from illnesses and other misfortunes that cause suspension of work, much of suffering and destitution not necessarily known to those who might have the means and disposition to relieve it, and probably more than could be adequately relieved from private resources. Again, it is objected that the idle should not be supported at the expense of the industrious, and that the able-bodied should be required to earn their own livelihood, and this would be perfectly true if employment could always be found for them; but, to my mind, the able-bodied man who seeks for, and can nowhere obtain, employment, and who may have a family, as well as himself, dependent upon his daily labour, is, to say the least of it, quite as much an object of compassion as any whose self-evident infirmities and helplessness are calculated to awaken sympathy and to command relief; for what alternative is there for the man to whom you deny both bread and the means of earning it? Let the objector to a Poor Law determine whether such a man is to starve, or to take by force or fraud what he connot otherwise obtain. The policy, therefore, as well as the humanity of making a State provision for the destitute, which has now been recognised in Ireland as well as in this country, is sufficiently manifest; and the only question for consideration properly was and is, in what manner can that provision be made with the best advantage for those who are the objects of it, and most consistently with the general well-being of the community? Of the evils of a system of outdoor relief, in food or money, the case of England—only now extricating herself from it—is a sufficient warning, and happily Ireland is spared from the infliction of a system of outdoor relief, at once so ruinous to property, and so injurious to the poor themselves. A system of emigration may, indeed, partially relieve the country; but it can afford no relief to the helpless and infirm—and without it were a compulsory one, which it ought not to be, the attachment of the poor to their native land, whatever their privations, is such as would render it nearly inoperative even as regards the able-bodied. Public works cannot be relied upon as a permanent resource: they are useful in emergencies, and as such I am glad to see they are viewed by Her Majesty's Government; but they can only afford employment in the particular districts where they are required, and while they are actually carried on. It only then remains to consider what has been the success of the alternative that was adopted, of the workhouse system of relief—whether it has yet had a fair trial—whether it has been properly administered, and of what improvement it is susceptible? Experience has happily shown how groundless were the principal objections at first urged against it by the opponents of the Poor Law, some affirming that the destitute would rather starve than resort to a workhouse—others, that no extent of workhouse accommodation would be sufficient for the applicants for admission. Experience has also shown that the workhouse test is as applicable to Ireland as to England, and that workhouse regulations can be framed, securing the interests alike of the pauper and of the ratepayer—and I speak from my own observation when I say, that the workhouse affords a comfortable asylum to age and infirmity—that the education and training of pauper children are such as to fit them for an after-life of usefulness and independence—and that able-bodied men have found in time of their utmost need a refuge, from whence, as opportunity of employment offered, they could issue forth with renewed health and improved habits. To lay down the details of workhouse government, and to preserve uniformity of administration, the constitution of a central authority in the Poor Law Commission was necessary; and it is much to be regretted that having prepared a system so calculated to work great good, they have, in the exercise of the great powers confided to them, so failed of acquiring the confidence of the public, that their unpopularity is, in fact, such as materially to impair their usefulness. Whether the extraordinary powers

with which they are invested, and which are so much complained of, are strictly necessary, is a question which may now be determined with some degree of certainty; very competent witnesses can now be examined upon the point; and I do not conceive that either the Government or Parliament would be disposed to continue, nor the Commissioners themselves be desirous to retain, in their hands any powers beyond what are really necessary for the effectual fulfilment of their duties. With respect, however, to any improper exercise of those powers, if charges of this kind should be preferred before the Committee, as they often have been by petition and otherwise before the House, I think, their investigation would be of great service, by leading either to the correction of abuse, or the removal of an unjust impression. I am not here to impugn the conduct of the Poor Law Commissioners, nor am I prepared to undertake their defence. I believe they have sometimes laid themselves justly open to censure; I at the same time think that much allowance should be made for the difficulties that, for the most part strangers to the country, they have sometimes had to encounter, and for the impossibility of giving satisfaction to parties holding upon particular points the most opposite opinions; and with respect to Mr. Nicholls in particular, upon whom devolved the duty of introducing a system of Poor Laws into Ireland, without the full concurrence and even in opposition to the feelings of the majority of those upon whose co-operation he had to depend, many of whom might be more friendly to the Commissioners of Enquiry of 1836, his task was necessarily one of peculiar difficulty. His administration was certainly not faultless, and I have felt it my duty upon a former occasion to animadvert upon his proceedings; but I am bound to say that I think his withdrawal from Ireland was unfortunate—that he was, although an Englishman, upon every other ground the fittest person to superintend the carrying into effect of an experiment, upon the principle and details of which he alone had been consulted. But whatever difficulties he, or those who succeeded him, may have had to contend with, it is most important for the interest and satisfaction of the public, that Parliament should exercise a jealous scrutiny over their proceedings, and that no power, not really necessary for the object of their appointment, should be left in their hands. I would now draw your Lordships' attention to the difficulty that has attended the collection of the poor rate. Returns are upon the Table showing the number of cases in which the collection of the rate has been resisted, and force, sometimes even military force, required to protect the collectors in the execution of their duty. It appears, also, that in two or three Unions, although the houses are built, they have never been opened for the relief of the poor, in consequence of the poor rate not having been paid. The causes of this resistance to a legal charge upon the land for an object that would seem so much to appeal to the better feelings of Irishmen, will form a subject for inquiry that will probably show where amendment in the law is most needed. The dislike of a new impost is not alone sufficient to account for the unpopularity of the poor rate: dislike is inseparable from an impost that produces no corresponding benefit. The ratepayer may know that an asylum has been provided, of which the orphan, the widow, and the cripple thankfully avail themselves; but I have a right to expect too, for it is a main object of the Act, that the streets and highways should be freed from the disgraceful exhibition of mendicancy, with its attendant train of sores, diseases, and deformities, purposely exposed, and often feigned, for the purpose of imposing upon the charitable and humane. I have a right to expect, too, for it was also promised, that the industrious poor shall be relieved of the burden of housing and feeding the mendicant population, and from the demoralizing influence of such associates—and I was taught to look forward to an era of peace, harmony, and great national improvement, under the operation of a law constituting the wealthier classes the guardians of the poor. Need I tell your Lordships how far the law has come short of fulfilling what was intended—need I tell you that Ireland presents as disgraceful a picture of turbulence, disunion, suffering, and mendicancy as ever—that discontent is almost universal—and can it, in such a case, be wondered at that the poor rate is an unpopular tax, and that the Poor Relief Act should be represented as a failure? I do not, my Lords, think that the Act has had a fair trial. It might have been foreseen that, in Ireland, as well as in every other country, the suppression of vagrancy would require the aid of police regulations; for want of it the Poor Law has failed of accomplishing this important object. Nor has it been otherwise supported as it should

have been, for I regret to say that the Government, by seeming to halt between two opinions, whether to carry out the principle of the Act or to leave it to its fate—and sometimes disowning the responsibility of the Act, as one that was passed by their predecessors — have shaken public confidence in its soundness and stability, and stript it of that moral influence it might otherwise have acquired. Their acquiescence, however, in the appointment of this Committee will be an assurance that this question will now be settled; and I trust your Lordships will be enabled to derive from the Committee's labours full information as to the amendments of the law by which its success may best be secured. Let me recall to your Lordships the fact that it was mainly in consequence of the current of public opinion in favour of the introduction of Poor Laws into Ireland, and of the Irish petitions that were presented to Parliament, that those Commissions of Inquiry were appointed which resulted in the present Poor Law, and that the Bill for its enactment was discussed and agreed to in the House of Commons in two successive Parliaments, and eventually passed by a large majority in this House. With so great a concurrence of public opinion originally in its favour, I think it is but reasonable to attribute its present unpopularity mainly to its having disappointed expectation. There are, however, circumstances in the details and working of the measure which have undoubtedly added to the difficulties of its application to Ireland, and which require and can receive the amendments that experience suggests. The occupiers, especially the small holders of land, are weighed down with the multiplicity of exactions, legal and illegal. If undertenants, they have to pay the half-yearly gales of the head landlord's rent, and the profit rents of the immediate lessor or middleman: that makes four payments of rent within the year. Of the county cess there are at present two collections; then superadded to these, come, perhaps, two more collections of poor rates within the year. Now, as these have all to be paid in cash—for, if paid in kind, it must be at immense loss—it is very difficult for a poor man, whose earning depends upon the state of the markets, and who cannot afford to have money lying idle, to be ready for so many separate payments. It is not so much the aggregate amount of what he has to pay that he complains of, which necessarily must be proportioned in some degree to the value of the property he holds. The fact that many have to pay, in addition to the charges I have mentioned, the Repeal rent, the O'Connell tribute, and other demands alike unauthorized by law, but all of which, under present circumstances, are just as compulsory as the legal charges upon the land, and that they yet have the means as well as the will to give welcome and food to those who ask it in the name of charity, shows that, in general, the humble occupiers of the soil have an interest in their holdings, which might be rendered valuable if duly secured to them. It is not, therefore, so much the total amount of what they are required to pay, as the frequency of the demand, that is harassing; and with respect to the poor rates, the uncertainty of their amount, and of the periods when they will be called for, are circumstances that render the tax additionally obnoxious. As a remedy for this, it appears to me, that if but one rate were to be made in the year, and to be collected at one fixed period in like manner, as it is recommended in the Report of the Land Commissioners that the grand jury cess should be collected, and perhaps along with it, such an arrangement would tend very much to the general satisfaction upon this point. The subject is one, however, upon which the Committee would be able to obtain the opinions of the most practical men. Again, the rate is now payable in the first instance by the occupier, who stops from his immediate lessor half the poundage rate out of every pound sterling he pays for rent. No plan, certainly, could be more equitable in theory, or more likely to work well; but it is admitted by the Commissioners themselves that, in practice, it has unfortunately interfered with the proper working of the Act. It was intended to establish a common interest between landlord and tenant, and that the burden of the poor rate should be equally divided between them. It has had the very opposite effect, causing, through the interest which tenant farmers generally possess upon boards of guardians, the valuations to be made so much under the real value of property, that the rate is unduly shifted from the tenant to the landlord; and thus that equality of interest in its economical management which it was so desirable to establish, is frustrated. This operates, however, with peculiar hardship upon the owners of tithe property; for, as the value of such property is, for the purposes of Poor Law taxation, determined by its actual gross amount, without any deductions or

allowances whatever, while all other rateable property is valued with large and capricious allowances by the ratepayers themselves, or their representatives, it follows, that in proportion as this valuation is lowered, the tax becomes heavier upon the tithe rent-charge. This is an injustice in the operation of the law which is calculated to create disgust, and which, certainly, ought to be redressed, although the sufferers being, for the most part, the clergy of the Established Church—who, are, perhaps, somewhat inured to injustice—the outcry upon this point has not extended beyond the presentation of humble remonstrances, in the shape of petitions, to Parliament, which, although I have endeavoured to bring the prayer of them under your Lordships' notice, have met with no other attention than being ordered to lie upon the Table. The inconvenience, however, of undervaluing rateable property is not alone felt in the derangement it causes of the distribution of the burden; it necessarily has the effect of raising the nominal amount, and, consequently, the odium of the tax, making a rate of perhaps two shillings in the pound necessary upon the Poor Law valuation, when one shilling in the pound upon a true valuation would have been sufficient. It prevents the real interest and position of a ratepayer from being satisfactorily determined; and it goes directly to falsify the oaths of those who, to obtain the elective franchise, have sworn to the possession of a valuable interest in their holdings above the rent they have to pay, when by the Poor Law valuation it would appear that they pay much beyond what the land is worth, and can, consequently, have no interest whatever. It would, I think, be for the better working of the Act, and do away with much of the temptation to undervalue rateable property, if in all cases of tenancy at will the rate were to be evenly divided between landlord and tenant, whatever amount of rent the tenant might agree to pay for his holding. If, however, it be an object with the Legislature, which I am far from saying it should not be, to discountenance the abuse of a landlord's power in letting his land at too high a rent, it should be no less an object to discountenance in tenants their taking land upon extravagant terms. Both these objects, I think, could be readily effected by requiring that, in every instance, where property is valued by the mutual agreement of landlord and tenant higher than by the Poor Law valuation, it should be rated accordingly to the relief of the poor, and the rate equally divided between them. This is a subject upon which the opinions of practical men might be examined into with advantage; it appears to me, however, that the modification I have suggested in the system of valuation and rating would, besides lessening the inducements to undervalue rateable property, against which there is at present no countervailing check, exercise a beneficial influence upon the relations between landlord and tenant, and unite them in an equality of interest in preventing the spread of pauperism in the land. Much complaint has been made with respect to the elections of Poor Law guardians, and the unpopularity of the Poor Relief Act has been greatly increased among most respectable persons by the results which those elections have frequently exhibited, owing to the undue influence exercised by the Roman Catholic priests. I cannot, however, consider that it is a complaint that calls for, even if it could be remedied by, legislative interference. A priest has as good a right to exercise any influence he may possess as has any other person; and although it is to be lamented, if the holding of particular sectarian or party opinions are made (and I am sorry to say that I have heard of frequent instances in which they have been so) a condition of being elected to fulfil the duties of a Poor Law guardian, or of holding office connected with the administration of relief to the poor, I would say that no amendment of the law, short of a disfranchisement of the lower orders, could prevent it. It is only by the progress of education among the poor, and by training the population, by degrees, to a just knowledge of their civil privileges, a right appreciation of free institutions—the gentry in the meantime assisting by their example to carry out the principles of representation in its true spirit—that this grievance—if grievance it can be called—though evil it undoubtedly is—can properly be removed. If some boards of guardians have in consequence been elected of a somewhat exclusive character, opposed in interest or feeling to the higher classes of ratepayers, they are, it is to be remembered, always associated with a body of magistrates, guardians *ex officio*, whose influence and example, steadily directed, may, and will, no doubt, lead the boards with which they are connected to lend themselves to the true business of their appointment, and to an impartial and faithful discharge of their duties. And I will

add, that looking at the manifest importance of drawing into harmony the several classes of society, and of breaking down that barrier which the systematic agitation of the country has raised up between landlord and tenant, between persons of different religious denominations, the consequences of which are now so painfully apparent in the scenes of bloodshed that desolate the land, it is incumbent upon the magistracy and gentry generally, whatever difficulties and discouragements they may meet with—and they are often very great—to interest and exert themselves in promoting the success, not of the Poor Law only, but of all that may tend to ameliorate the condition of the population. I must now draw your Lordships' attention to a very serious evil, however, and one for which a remedy is indispensable: it is the impression that exists upon the minds of Protestants in many of the Irish Unions, that a pauper professing the Protestant religion cannot be sent into the workhouse without danger of his faith being tampered with. This impression, I fear, is not altogether groundless, and has, no doubt, been strengthened by the preference given to Roman Catholic over Protestant clergymen in the appointments made of workhouse chaplains—an abuse of power on the part of the Poor Law Commissioners which I some years ago brought under your Lordships' notice. But strongly as I objected to the course then taken, and since pursued, and although I yet retain all the objections I then urged, I do not think that in any well-administered workhouse, to which a chaplain of the established religion has been appointed, there should be anything to apprehend on behalf of a Protestant pauper as to his free profession of Protestantism. To some workhouses, however, no Protestant chaplains have been appointed; and from others I have received accounts of children having been, without any parental sanction, arbitrarily handed over to the Church of Rome, after having been entered as Protestants. Not to mention any case not duly authenticated, I will only notice what I find in the Appendix to the Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, where there is a correspondence showing that the practice had been very common in the South Dublin Union workhouse. The following extract from the uncontradicted statement of the Protestant chaplain to the Commissioners exhibits a toleration of abuse that calls for inquiry, and merits, if true, the greatest censure:—

"The responsibility which devolves upon me, as Protestant chaplain to the South Dublin Union Poorhouse, will, I trust, justify me in soliciting your attention to the following resolution, adopted by the board of guardians on Thursday last:—'Resolved—That Edward, John, and Arthur Murray be allowed to carry their desire into effect, and be tranferred from the care of the Protestant to the Roman Catholic chaplain, and that the registry be altered accordingly.' This resolution appears to me most arbitrary. I am not aware that the Poor Law Act empowers the board of guardians to transfer Protestant children to the Roman Catholic chaplain, nor is this resolution the first of the kind. There are now several children who were so transferred in attendance upon Roman Catholic instruction, notwithstanding remonstrances which have been made by me."

I have heard of cases of the same kind occurring in other Unions; but that facts might be duly authenticated in reference to a subject where there is so much danger of exaggeration, I made application for an official return, which might have afforded information to be relied upon. Her Majesty's Government, however, upon, as I think, a mistaken view of the subject, did not comply with my request, leaving it for the Committee, if they should think proper, to call for the information. Had the return been granted, it might, perhaps, have appeared that the abuse has not been all on one side; but I am sure your Lordships will agree with me, that such conversions of children, of very tender years, incapable of forming a judgment upon a religious question, whatever be the change of religion, are far from being creditable to those by whom they are brought about, or by whom they are sanctioned, and that they are a gross abuse that ought not to be tolerated. It is, moreover, utterly at variance with the enactments of the Poor Law, and most inconsistent with the spirit in which it ought to be administered. The evil effects of the proceedings I have alluded to are painfully apparent in the South Dublin Union workhouse, in all other respects a most admirably conducted establishment; the classification that has there taken place of the Roman Catholics apart from the Protestants, is a circumstance that must be viewed as in the highest degree detrimental to the feelings of the paupers. One great object in the law should be to cultivate harmony and kindly feelings among the poor, as well as among the rich, of every religious denomination, and to secure liberty of religion to all; and it is difficult to conceive how any greater security could have been provided for the religious liberty of the paupers of every communion, than the responsibility in the first

place of the clergymen appointed as chaplains—then that of the board of guardians—then that of the Poor Law Commissioners—and, lastly, that of Parliament. Experience, however, has shown that this is not enough. It should be imperative upon the Commissioners to appoint a Protestant, as they have a Roman Catholic, chaplain to every workhouse. From the workhouses to which no Protestant chaplains have been appointed, the Protestant poor must feel themselves excluded; though few in number, they are entitled to equal privileges with the Roman Catholics, and, I regret to add, have need of greater protection. The duty of guardians also should be more clearly set forth, as regards the religious instruction of orphan or deserted children. It should be obligatory upon them not only to take care that while in the workhouse such children be properly instructed, but that they be retained in the profession of that form of doctrine for which their godfathers have undertaken, until they have reached an age at which the responsibility of a godfather may be held to cease, and they are capable of showing that they fully understand the nature and ground of their faith. It will, however, be desirable for the Committee to inquire into the practice I have alluded to of proselytism, and to recommend such steps as may be necessary to prevent any improper interference with the faith of pauper children, of whatever religious denomination, or their abandonment, without the consent of parents or godfathers, of the faith into which they have been baptized, before that period of life in which they might be deemed fit for the rite, common to the churches of Rome and of England, of confirmation. The next matter that calls for consideration in amending the Poor Law, is the necessity of providing for the better nursing of foundlings and deserted children. The law cannot be made too strong against the mother who deserts her infant child; but, on the other hand, to preserve the life of the infant, the workhouse is not a good resource. I am under the impression—having lately read a report of Mr. Assistant-Commissioner Hall, and an able statistical work of Dr. Willis upon the subject—that there has been some exaggeration of the extent and of the causes of the mortality among that unfortunate class; but I am still of opinion that many an infant has been lost owing to the want of a mother's care, or of that care which it might be the interest of a poor person to bestow upon it if it were put out to nurse. The pauper inmates of a workhouse, when appointed to take charge of infants not their own, and commonly very delicate, owing to the hardships they may have undergone from exposure, cannot be made to bestow, without reward, the requisite care; and it is, therefore, always easy in the infant ward of a workhouse to distinguish the children who are nursed by their mothers from the rest. Under the grand jury laws, it is the practice to give foundling children out to nurse for twelve years, at 4*l.* a year, which is about, or rather under, what they would cost if reared in a poorhouse. To leave them so long as twelve years, as out-pensioners, would be to debar the unfortunate objects of the advantages of education which the workhouses afford; but I conceive that if they were nursed out for only two or three years, an existing evil of outdoor relief by county presentments might be abated; the lives of many would be saved, the cause of humanity served, and a just ground of complaint against the Poor Law removed. The subject is one upon which I have received many representations, and which I conceive to be well deserving of an attentive inquiry. I pass over some minor points, to hasten to the consideration of the last and most important question in reference to the Poor Law; one, which I was sorry last Session to be informed that the Government were not prepared to take up—I mean the carrying out of the objects of the Poor Relief Act, by giving it efficacy as a measure for the suppression of mendicancy. As far back as the year 1841, this defect in the law had been strongly noticed by public bodies, and representations upon the subject were made by no less than forty boards of guardians. The Commissioners, too, have repeatedly insisted upon its importance to the success of the measure, and the Government of the day even brought in a Bill upon the subject, the passing of which, I believe, was only prevented by the political changes that then took place. In one of Mr. Nicholls's three Reports, which were, in fact, the foundation of the Poor Law, he observes with great truth, that—

> "Unless the great mass of the Irish population be protected from the effects of destitution, no great or lasting improvement in their social condition can be expected:"

and any one at all acquainted with Ireland must be sensible what an obstacle to national improvement—what a clog upon the industry of the lower classes, is the

outdoor support of the numerous professional beggars that infest the country. The Poor Law, my Lords, is now in general operation, and the workhouses are all completed, the want of which, as I gathered from the noble Duke's speech, in answer to my noble Friend's Motion for a Committee of Inquiry in the year 1843, alone prevented Her Majesty's Government at that time from dealing with the question of the suppression of mendicancy. That measure can now be considered free from the objection that the mendicant has no other resource but begging. The same alternative as in this country is now presented to the mendicant in every quarter of Ireland. The workhouses are everywhere available; and it is but fair that those who have paid for them, and are taxed for upholding them, should derive the benefit they were designed to confer. It should be recollected that when the Poor Law was passed without the clauses against vagrancy, an expectation was held out that the mere existence of receptacles for the poor, and the expense of maintaining them, would have had the effect of discouraging, perhaps altogether putting a stop to the practice of alms giving and street begging. The operation of the law has been the very reverse. Mendicity institutions, previously established expressly for the purpose of suppressing mendicancy, were closed to make way for the more comprehensive experiment of the Poor Law undertaken by the Government; and the consequence was, that as the moral influence of a great public combination was removed, street begging, with all its demoralizing effects, returned in full vigour. It is now eight years since the enactment of the Poor Law; and all that the citizen sees in return for very heavy assessment to which he has been subjected from the beginning, is the unavailing machinery of a vast and comprehensive undertaking, the failure of a great scheme of legislative wisdom, which, as such, is viewed by a large portion of the Irish people as evidence of the incompetency of a British Parliament to legislate for Ireland, and by Irishmen in general with the same growing feelings of impatience and dissatisfaction, which so many circumstances connected with the government of Ireland have, more particularly of late, awakened. The step of framing an Act for the suppression of mendicancy—now that the machinery is provided—does not appear a matter of any great difficulty; it may be done in the most gradual manner. Were clauses for the purpose, analogous to those in the original Poor Law Bill enacted, with a proviso, however, that they should only be of force in Poor Law districts, where the boards of guardians applied for them, and after due notification; I am strongly of opinion that the beneficial operation of the law would be so sensibly felt, wherever it was called for, that it would speedily be proclaimed in every Union in Ireland. In order, however, thus to carry out the objects of the Poor Laws, a new classification of the pauper inmates of the workhouses would be necessary; that among the adults of both sects separation should be made of those whose destitution might be the consequence of vice, from paupers of irreproachable character. Such a step would be at once a protection to morals, and a material improvement of workhouse discipline. Among the destitute are to be found persons of the most abandoned characters, whose association with the better conducted members of the lower classes, is one of the evils under which Ireland, for want of an effective Poor Law, has so long laboured. By many boards of guardians, it is felt that it would be an injustice, and a practical denial of relief to the unfortunate but deserving poor, to say to them that they shall only be admitted to the workhouse on the terms of being associated with every depraved character whom hunger, want, or disease, may bring to the workhouse door. It is, however, no less practically a denial of the claims of destitution, that a due consideration for the well-conducted forbids, except in extreme cases, the admission of men or women of bad character; thereby throwing them back as dependents upon public compassion, or upon the wages of profligacy or crime. An additional class on each side of every workhouse would, I conceive, remove this inconvenience, and be attended with the greatest moral benefit to the paupers in general, securing the good from the contamination of evil associates, and creating among the latter a salutary desire, as well as an opening for acquiring a new character, and being reinstated in a way of earning an honest livelihood. The present extent of workhouse accommodation would probably be sufficient for the purpose. The houses, during the past year, having been in general more than two-third parts empty, notwithstanding the want of a proper system of outdoor medical relief, I see no reason to apprehend that the workhouse test of destitution being applied to those

who infest the highways in the mendicant character, the numbers to be relieved would, upon the whole, exceed what Mr. Nicholls in his reports suggested, and what the Legislature contemplated in passing the Poor Relief Act—viz., one per cent. upon the population of Ireland, or somewhat less than what the workhouses are capable of accommodating. Without thus carrying out the experiment of the Poor Laws, no certain knowledge can ever be arrived at of the real extent of destitution in Ireland, of the number of the helpless who must necessarily be a burden to the country, and of the number of the able-bodied of both sexes, who, having no resources at home, might be, with advantage to themselves, and to the interests of the Empire, located elsewhere. The Poor Law, with the aid of a strong enactment against vagrancy, would add to present inducements to ratepayers to give employment, but their means of doing so are very limited; it would behove the State, therefore, if the resources of industry which can be provided at home, in agriculture or manufactures, be found insufficient, with the concurrent operation of the Poor Law to provide subsistence for all, promptly; and before the evil be further increased, to take into consideration the difficulty that sooner or later must be dealt with of an over-abundant population. I am sensible, my Lords, that I have detained you a very long time—that I have unduly trespassed upon your attention—but, if I owe you an apology for having done so, I, on the other hand, should have been, perhaps, more inexcusable in bringing forward a Motion of this kind without showing upon what grounds I did so. I have only now to move—

"That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the Operation of the 1st and 2nd Vict., Cap. 56, and the other Laws relating to the Relief of the destitute Poor in Ireland; and also to inquire into the Operation of the Medical Charities in Ireland which are supported wholly or partially by Grants from the County Cess."

Lord BROUGHAM felt, that there was no ground for the charge of want of attention on the part of the House, which had been made by the noble Earl. He, for one, had been listening for more than an hour and three-quarters to the speech of the noble Earl, and that made on an unopposed Motion. This latter circumstance sufficiently accounted for the thin attendance of noble Lords, for on such occasions it was not customary to preface the Motion with a long speech; but the noble Earl had stated everything that could possibly be brought forward in Committee, and in doing so he virtually almost defeated his own object; for if he brought all out there, what was the use of a Committee? Before he sat down, he was anxious to express his earnest hope to his noble Friends connected with the Government, that they would not delay the measures they intended to bring forward with respect to Ireland, and which had been adverted to in the Speech from the Throne. He trusted that they would at once be brought forward in that House, where at present they had nothing else to do, and where they would meet with immediate attention, and the unanimous support of the House, if they were founded, and of which he had little doubt, in a spirit of wisdom and mercy towards the people of Ireland.

The Duke of WELLINGTON said, Her Majesty's Government would take care that the suggestion of the noble and learned Lord should be attended to; and added, that there was not the smallest objection to the Motion of the noble Earl.

Motion agreed to; Committee appointed.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Thursday, February 5, 1846.

Minutes.] New Writs.—For Buckingham, *v.* Right Hon. Sir Thomas Francis Fremantle, Bart., Chiltern Hundreds.—For Dorset, *v.* Lord Ashley, Chiltern Hundreds; Henry Charles Sturt, Esq., Chiltern Hundreds.

New Member Sworn. For Sussex (Eastern Division), Charles Hay Frewen, Esq.

Public Bills.—1°. Citations (Scotland); Burghs (Scotland); Roman Catholic Relief.

Petitions Presented. From Dorset and Maxweltown, for Remission of Sentence on Frost, Williams, and Jones.—From Newcastle-upon-Tyne, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From Blandford Forum, Winbarne Minster, and Dorchester, against Alteration, and from Hastings, Newport, and Sir Thomas Bucklie Lethbridge, Bart., for Repeal of the Corn Laws.—From Bagilt, for Reduction of Duty on Lead and Lead Ore.—From Members and Friends of the Roman Catholic Congregation of Lee House (Lanark), for the Adoption of Measures to prevent the interference of Roman Catholic Bishops or Pope's Vicars, in the Administration of the Temporalities of Roman Catholic Chapels.—From Connonley, in favour of the Factories Bill.—From Provost of Pollokshaws, in favour of proposed Alteration in Customs and Corn Importation Acts.

MANCHESTER AND SOUTHAMPTON RAILWAY—FALSIFYING A PETITION.

Mr. GISBORNE, who had placed a Notice on the Paper for a Select Committee on the petition of Charles Evans Deacon and John Wheeler, with reference to a petition which had been presented relative to this railway, said, that in rising to call the attention of the House to the petition, he had the pleasure of being able

to say that he was now in a condition to state not only that every allegation in that petition was true, but also that he could now give the House an explanation as to how the irregularity occurred. It did not appear that there was in the present case any attempt to commit a fraud on any party, but there was a very great degree of irregularity, which the House could not fail to visit with severe reprehension. The statement was, that after the petition had been presented an alteration was made in it by interpolating a sheet containing various allegations which did not exist in the petition at the time it was presented to the House. That was now allowed to be the case, and the explanation which had been handed to him by one of the clerks at the Table was, that the petition had been placed by the parties in the hands of Mr. Vacher, the law stationer, in order that a copy might be made for presentation, and that the man who was directed to join the sheets had accidentally dropped one of them, so that the petition was delivered and presented without that sheet. It was further explained that Mr. Vacher, on finding that a sheet had been omitted, went to the office of the Clerk of the House, asked for the petition, and placed the dropped sheet in its proper place. It seemed to him a serious matter that any person should be allowed to alter a petition after presentation. There was no fraud attempted in the present case; but, at the same time, when matters of such great interest were concerned, it became the House to see that no alterations were made in a petition after presentation. The facts being now before them, he had no object in moving for a Committee on the subject. The Notice had had the good effect of inducing the parties to give an explanation. He had no wish to punish the parties, and thought that the House might safely leave the matter in the hands of the Speaker, confident that that right hon. Gentleman would take the steps necessary to prevent the recurrence of so gross an irregularity. He apprehended, however, that the dropped sheet could not be considered as having been presented. On that point he should be glad to hear the opinion of the Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER said, that he had no hesitation in stating to the hon. Gentleman and to the House, that the petition would only be valid with reference to those parts of it which had actually been presented, and that those parts which had not been presented could not be properly referred to the Committee. He had instituted inquiries into the case, and the report which he had received corresponded with the statement made by the Member for Nottingham. If the House would leave the matter in his hands he would attend to it.

MR. FRENCH hoped there would be no objection to his calling the attention of the Speaker to a case of not exactly a similar kind, with regard to which he had already presented petitions. The statement was, that three petitions had been presented by the hon. Member for Totness (Mr. B. Baldwin) which had been interpolated with different statements after one of the parties had signed them, and had been presented as if they had been regularly signed, while the fact was that one of the parties was not aware of the additions made.

MR. B. BALDWIN said, that he did not know how the petitions had been got up; they had merely been transmitted to him for presentation.

Subject at an end.

MEDICAL RELIEF TO THE POOR.

MR. WODEHOUSE said, there were two questions he wished to put to the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury, if he would indulge him with a moment's attention. One was, whether he would consent to take into consideration the expediency of placing the whole sum required under the head of medical relief to the poor upon the same footing? The Poor Law Commissioners had intimated, that in the agricultural districts the authorities were apt to give a less liberal salary than those in the manufacturing districts, and therefore it would be well, as such an unhappy collision between the two classes had arisen, that on nice questions and cases some persons eminent in the profession should be always at hand. The other question had more immediate reference to a person with whom the right hon. Baronet was personally acquainted—a very eminent person, known in the literary world as a great linguist, having edited French, German, and Spanish grammars, and also brought out a work on the use of the globes; his name was Rowbotham. That gentleman had drawn up a curious analysis of the relative taxation of land and houses; and the question he proposed to the right hon. Baronet was simply this—whether Mr. Rowbotham was not for some time employed by him as a teacher in the

minor branches of the mathematics, and more particularly arithmetic?

SIR R. PEEL, in answer to the first question, observed, that while proposing that a part of the salaries of medical officers should be borne by the Treasury by means of a Vote of Parliament, he was very anxious that there should be a local check against an improvident expenditure, by the ratepayers bearing a portion of the expense, as well as by the revision incidental to an annual Vote in Parliament. Provision for medical relief would, no doubt, be most willingly made by whatever body had the control of it; but there was a tendency to abuse in such cases, and therefore the double check was proposed. However, perhaps if the hon. Gentleman could have assured him of his cordial support of the other portions of the proposed measures, he might have endeavoured to yield upon this. As to the other point, he really could not say that he had any recollection of employing the individual whose name had been mentioned in the way supposed by the hon. Member.

SPANISH AND BRAZILIAN TRADE.

DR. BOWRING rose to ask, whether Her Majesty's Government had received from the Spanish Government any statement of their intention to visit the commerce of England with hostile measures on account of the unfavourable position in which the sugars of the Spanish colonies were left under the existing Tariff; and also, whether the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had any knowledge of any instructions being given, or about to be given, in the Spanish colonies, the object of which would be to throw impediments in the way of the indirect communication of British vessels with those colonies—that is, vessels not trading directly between Great Britain and the Spanish colonies?

SIR R. PEEL said, that Her Majesty's Government certainly had not received any communication from the Spanish Government which led him to believe that the Spanish Government had any intention hostile to the commerce of this country. By some Papers which would be laid upon the Table of the House, it would be seen that the Spanish Government had reserved to itself the power of acting upon principles unfavourable to the British Government; but no communication had been received from it, indicating any intention to make use of that power. So far from it, in a very recent discussion, the following was the account of the relations of this country with Spain that was given by that eminent person the Minister for Foreign Affairs in that country, M. Martinez de la Rosa:—

> "Our motto is—'Good will towards all, friendship with some, special intimacy with none.' As far as England is concerned, it has rarely happened that our relations with that country have been more frank, more friendly, and more satisfactory, than they are at this day. The Spanish Government has received on various recent occasions proofs of the confidence which England places in our probity and good faith."

He (Sir R. Peel) thought that must be satisfactory to the hon. Member and to the House. Of course, a remonstrance would be made if any such course were to be adopted as the hon. Member pointed out.

LORD J. RUSSELL said, that perhaps this would be the fittest time for the question of which he had given notice—whether Her Majesty's Government had had any further correspondence with the Spanish Government on the subject of the sugars of Cuba; and whether the right hon. Baronet was prepared to lay on the Table any such further correspondence?

SIR R. PEEL answered, that there had been a further correspondence; two letters had passed, one on each side. There might be some inconvenience in laying them on the Table at present; and perhaps the noble Lord would be satisfied with his (Sir R. Peel's) assurance, that the House should be in possession of them on a future day, in ample time before the discussion on the Sugar Duties.

MR. LABOUCHERE wished to ask the right hon. Baronet whether he were able to make the same statement with regard to the Brazilian Government or Legislature; or whether they had intimated any intention of acting with hostility towards our Colonies, in consequence of our measures hostile to the consumption of Brazilian sugar?

SIR R. PEEL said, the terms of this inquiry were rather vague, as it asked respecting any intimation given by the Brazilian Government or Legislature; he would rather be accurate in his reply, and would therefore give an answer next day; because, as to "intimation," he could hardly speak.

PURCHASE OF MAIZE.

MR. FORSTER wished to ask the right hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether there was any truth in a report

current out of doors, that Government had purchased, or suggested the purchase, of a quantity of maize or Indian corn for this country in the United States of America? Mr. Forster added, that he did not believe the report himself; but it was believed by many.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER answered, that almost immediately after the receipt by the Government of that Report of Dr. Playfair and Mr. Lindley which had been laid upon the Table, the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary, the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury, and himself, consulted upon the course proper to be taken; and orders were given for purchasing in the United States a certain quantity of maize for the consumption of the people of Ireland.

MR. FORSTER considered the principle of this transaction most objectionable. Such a system would be calculated to paralyse private enterprise; the public ought to know how the matter stood.

BRAZILIAN CRIMINALS AND THE SLAVE TRADE.

MR. HUTT inquired, whether the Government were in a condition to lay on the Table an account of the grounds on which the Judges had decided that we had no jurisdiction in the case of the Brazilian prisoners who were tried for felony at the last Summer Assizes; and also, whether it were the intention of Government to repeal any part of the Brazilian Slave Trade Act passed last Session?

SIR J. GRAHAM observed, that in cases of felony our law gave no appeal to any court of error. If the Judge who tried the prisoner entertained doubts with respect to the legality of the conviction, the course was for him to grant a respite of the sentence, until he could have an opportunity of consulting the other Judges. There was not always an argument heard in open court; very commonly it was a conference among the Judges themselves. If, after such conference, the Judge who tried the case should find his doubt of the validity of the conviction confirmed by his brethren, a communication was made to the Secretary of State, requesting him to recommend Her Majesty to grant a free pardon. In the case referred to, there was an argument, which was heard in the Court of Exchequer; in the ordinary course no judgment would be publicly given; but he (Sir J. Graham) was informed by the Judge, that, upon consultation with his brethren, he was induced to advise a pardon. He had no cognizance of the grounds on which the Judges came to that conclusion; nor was he in a condition to lay a statement of them upon the Table. With regard to the other point, the Government had no intention of proposing any alteration of the Act with respect to the Brazilian Slave Trade, which received the sanction of the Legislature last Session.

SIR R. PEEL would take that occasion of noticing that the hon. Member for Manchester (Mr. Gibson) proposed to move for the production of correspondence, in continuation of that presented last year, relative to the conduct of Brazil with reference to the Convention of 1826 and the Slave Trade Act of last Session; it would be very desirable that that Motion should be postponed. The last despatch presented last Session from Lord Aberdeen to the British Minister concluded thus:—

"You are already aware that the measure by which, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, the Government of Brazil would best evince their determination to carry out the intention which they have so solemnly recorded, would be the negotiation of a Treaty similar either to that concluded between Great Britain and Spain in 1835, or to that between Great Britain and Portugal of 1842. Should the Brazilian Government show any willingness to entertain the question of such a Treaty, you will frankly declare that nothing would give Her Majesty's Government more sincere pleasure than to find themselves relieved, by the conclusion of it, from enforcing the operation of the Bill which they are now about to propose to Parliament; and you will assure the Brazilian Ministers, that it will be a source of real satisfaction to Her Majesty's Government to return to a good understanding, both on this and on other subjects, with a nation in whose welfare and independence they have, from the earliest times, taken a lively interest, and whose growing prosperity and power they have witnessed with the greatest gratification. I am, &c.

"ABERDEEN."

The conclusion of a Treaty would enable the Government even to propose a repeal of the Bill of last Session. Communications were pending upon the subject; and it would be prejudicial to the public interest to produce the correspondence at present.

MR. M. GIBSON would postpone his Motion.

THE TARIFF.

MR. PATTISON inquired how soon the new duties would come into operation?

SIR R. PEEL answered, that so soon as the House should have affirmed any Resolution it might be pleased to come

to, and allowed that Resolution to be reported, the Government would propose, in conformity with the general usage, immediately to permit the reduction of the duties, taking the usual guarantee that in the event of the Resolution not receiving the final sanction of Parliament, the old duties should be paid. Generally speaking, therefore, the reduction would take effect from the day on which the Resolution was agreed to; but perhaps there would be an exception made in the case of seeds, on which the reduction might not take effect until June.

MR. PATTISON considered the answer given by the right hon. Gentleman to be highly satisfactory.

SILK DUTIES.

MR. ELLICE said, he had occasion to make representations to the Board of Trade on behalf of his constituents in Coventry, who were very much interested in some of the proposed reductions of duty. He believed that notwithstanding the anxiety they had expressed upon the subject they would give a general concurrence to the plan in question. But, at the same time, they had sent a memorial to the Board of Trade, expressing their earnest desire that under the peculiar circumstances of the case the reduction of the silk duties might not immediately take place, but might be delayed until the beginning of July, when the season for the sale of silk goods would have arrived. He hoped that the right hon. Baronet would be prepared to give to that subject some further consideration.

SIR R. PEEL said, that the answer he had given to the hon. Member for London did not preclude him from listening to any representations that might be made with respect to any particular trade. He must do the people of Coventry the justice to say, that although their interests would be more interfered with by the proposed alterations of duty than the inhabitants of any other town, they had shown a readiness to bear their share of the reductions, which entitled them to the highest credit. But he felt a sincere conviction that they would not be benefited by any delay in carrying out the alterations in question.

THE DUTIES ON FOREIGN CORN.

LORD J. RUSSELL wished to know whether the principle which the right hon. Gentleman had laid down in the answer he had given to his hon. Friend the Member for the city of London would be applied to the duties upon foreign corn?

SIR R. PEEL said, that, as soon as the Resolutions should have passed, if they were to be passed, and should have been reported to the House, he proposed that the reduction of the duties on corn should at once take effect.

NATURALISATION OF FOREIGNERS.

MR. HUTT said, he wished to put a question to the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department with respect to the naturalisation of foreigners. The House would recollect that an Act had been lately passed which altered in a material degree the laws previously in force upon that subject. He wished to ask the right hon. Baronet whether that alteration had, in his opinion, worked satisfactorily?

SIR J. GRAHAM said, he had no hesitation in stating to the hon. Gentleman that since that Act had come into operation many applications for naturalisation had been made under its provisions; and although he had entertained important doubts as to the expediency of passing such a measure, he had reason to know that it had worked most satisfactorily.

IRISH SPIRIT DUTIES.

SIR H. W. BARRON wished to put a question to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, of which he had given notice, respecting the duty on Irish spirits. It was proposed that foreign spirits should be admitted at a reduced duty; and he wished to know whether any similar reduction was to be made on the duty upon Irish spirits, so that the Irish proprietors and the Irish distillers might not be placed in a worse position than that which they at present occupied in the English market?

SIR R. PEEL said, that Irish spirits introduced into England or into Scotland, were permitted to be entered on paying the same amount of duty to which English spirits and Scotch spirits were subject. He was sure that the hon. Gentleman did not mean to ask that Irish spirits should be admitted into England on payment of the Irish duty. That duty was only 2*s.* 10*d.*; foreign spirits would be subject to a duty of 15*s.*, and they would, therefore, not come into competition under very favourable circumstances with Irish spirits. He did not intend that Irish spirits should be admitted to the English market on the

payment of a less duty than that to which they were subject at present—namely, the duty to which British spirits were subject.

SIR H. W. BARRON only wished to know whether a reduction of the duty on Irish spirits would be made corresponding with the reduction of the duty on foreign spirits?

SIR R. PEEL said, that the hon. Baronet put the question as if he were disposed to complain of a grievance. But there was in reality no grievance whatever in the case. Ireland was permitted to distil spirits on payment of a duty of 2*s.* 10*d.*, while the duty in England was 7*s.* 10*d.* Ireland was, therefore, fairly dealt with in the matter.

SIR H. W. BARRON said, that the right hon. Baronet had diverted the attention of the House from the main point. He did not wish that Irish spirits should pay a less duty in the English market than that paid by English spirits. His object merely was that there should be a reduction of the duty on the home-grown article proportioned to the reduction of the duty on the foreign commodity.

SIR R. PEEL said, that the Notice given by the hon. Baronet was as follows:—"To ask Sir R. Peel if any alteration is to be proposed by which the landed interest in Ireland may have the benefit of the British markets for Irish spirits." Surely the landed interest in Ireland would not be deprived of any advantage to which they were fairly entitled by the proposed alteration of the duty on foreign spirits.

SIR H. W. BARRON certainly felt that the question, as it appeared in the Notice Paper, was not sufficiently explicit; and he had, therefore, thought it his duty to state the immediate point to which he wished to call the attention of the right hon. Baronet.

Subject at an end.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF.

Mr. WATSON rose to move, pursuant to Notice, for leave to bring in a—

"Bill for the further repeal of Enactments imposing pains and penalties upon Her Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects, on account of their religion."

The hon. and learned Gentleman said, that he did not mean to preface the Motion by any lengthened observations, and that he did not wish to invite discussion at that stage of the measure. A Bill containing similar provisions had last year met to a certain extent with the approbation of the Government, and those provisions had received the sanction of the Criminal Law Commissioners, to whom the whole subject had been referred. The enactments which he sought to repeal were a deep stain on our Statute Book. They were enactments no longer suited to the age, and he therefore expected no opposition to the measure from any quarter in that House. The Criminal Law Commissioners had said that these Statutes had now become obsolete, that they were opposed to the feelings of the people, and that they ought to be at once repealed. There was one part of the Bill to which he particularly called the attention of the hon. Baronet the Member for the University of Oxford, and that was the repeal of certain severe enactments affecting the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church, which were continued in the Bill of 1829—he meant the regular clergy, who had come to this country and placed themselves under monastic vows since the passing of that Act. He believed few persons did more good in their sphere than these men, who had devoted themselves to religious purposes and acts of charity; and yet they were liable, on coming into this country and placing themselves under monastic vows, to severe punishment, even to transportation. He thought it, indeed, high time that such an enactment should be removed from the Statute-book. It was utterly absurd to suppose that this could be one of the safeguards which the Church obtained in 1829, or to imagine that the existence of a body who spent their lives in acts of charity and mercy, in following out their religion, should endanger the Church of this country. With these few observations he would simply move for leave to bring in the Bill.

SIR J. GRAHAM did not intend to offer any opposition to the introduction of the Bill by the hon. and learned Gentleman, if he should think it expedient, under the circumstances he was about to state, to persevere in his Motion. In consequence of what took place at the close of the last Session of Parliament, the whole subject of the Penal Laws, not only affecting Roman Catholics, but all dissenters from the Established religion, was referred to the Criminal Law Commissioners, with the direction that any Statute or portion of a Statute which in their opinion was susceptible of a penal character should be embodied in one Bill. During the recess the Criminal Law Commissioners, acting on that instruction, had framed a Bill, which

had been laid before the other House of Parliament by the Lord Chancellor, with the full concurrence of the Government. Every effort would be made by Government to pass that measure; and he confidently expected in a short period to be able to introduce it to that House. It was a measure fully as comprehensive as that which he announced to the House at the end of the last Session.

SIR R. H. INGLIS had felt it his duty not to rise until his right hon. Friend had addressed the House. He rejoiced on one account, and on one poor account only, at the observations which had fallen from him; and that was, because they had clearly proved to his mind that in his predictions last Session he had not wasted the time of the House; the fears which he had entertained last year, having in the present year been realized by Her Majesty's Government. He wished that hon. Gentlemen opposite would permit him to urge upon them respectfully and seriously the expediency of leaving their separate projects, whatever they might be, in the hands of Her Majesty's present advisers. He believed that the advice just tendered by the right hon. Baronet to the hon. and learned Member for Kinsale might with equal sincerity be tendered to other Members of the House; and that the objects which other hon. Members had in view would be attained quite as readily as the objects of the hon. and learned Gentleman would be attained, by transferring their labours to Her Majesty's Government. He did not mean to divide the House on the Motion for leave to bring in the Bill then under their consideration; but he wished to remind the House what was the nature of the Bill which the hon. and learned Gentleman had brought forward last year, and what was the nature of the Bill, precisely similar in its provisions, which he now asked leave to introduce; and which the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department had adopted as his own. It was a Bill to repeal the Act of Supremacy; it was a Bill to enable Roman Catholic bishops to assume the titles of the sees of prelates of the Established Church; it was a Bill to legalize processions (and processions, let them recollect, of one class of persons, while they had prohibited the processions of another class of persons on the ground of their exciting public opposition and hostility); it was a Bill to repeal the Act for expelling the Jesuits. Could any hon. Member deny that that was a fair summary of the Bill brought in by the hon. and learned Gentleman about this time last year, and which had been rejected on the 9th of July, when it stood for going into Committee? But he should repeat to the hon. and learned Gentleman, and to other hon. Members having similar projects for effecting a "blessed reformation in Church and State," that they might rely much more upon the assistance of Gentlemen on that side of the House, than they could rely on the assistance of his noble Friend the Member for the city of London. His noble Friend had said, on the 9th of July, he believed, when the Bill stood for a Committee, that although "he could not oppose the Motion for going into Committee, he was not prepared to say that he assented to all its provisions." Was not that a lesson to hon. Members who entertained what were called liberal views not to trouble the House with any amateur legislation on their parts, but to suggest their wishes to Her Majesty's present advisers, and to leave to them the accomplishment of those wishes, instead of consuming night after night in vain endeavours to direct the attention of the House to their measures? They might rest assured that those measures would be brought forward with all the advantages of the Government machinery and the Government advocacy, and would be passed on the nights devoted to Government business. He said it seriously—he believed it would be found that the most successful mode of proceeding for carrying those measures, would be for hon. Gentlemen opposite to suggest them first, and then to leave them in the hands of the present advisers of the Crown. Let any body deny that he had correctly stated the substance of the Bill which the hon. and learned Gentleman had introduced last year, and he would be ready to apologise to the House for any unintentional misrepresentation. He repeated, deliberately, that, as far as he recollected, that Bill had comprehended the four points to which he had already adverted, and which were in the present Session, they were told, to be brought forward in the House of Lords, with all the authority of a united Cabinet, by the Lord High Chancellor of England. From what he knew of that new Government measure, he believed it was substantially the same as that which the hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Kinsale had just asked leave to introduce.

SIR J. GRAHAM would not charge the

hon. Baronet with intentionally misrepresenting him, but certainly he had both misrepresented him and misled the House, however unintentionally on his part. He said the Government had adopted the measure of the hon. Gentleman opposite. He (Sir J. Graham) gave a direct but respectful denial to that assertion. So far from adopting the measure of the hon. Gentleman, if it was the same which he introduced last year, on the occasion to which the hon. Member for Oxford had referred, he must state that there were certain clauses in that Bill to which, on the part of Government, he was opposed. He knew not what the Bill was, but if it was the same with that of last year, he should have the same objections to certain clauses which he had stated on the former occasion. With respect to the measure brought forward by the Government in the other House of Parliament, he should be prepared to defend it in all its parts; and if the hon. Baronet chose to attend when the time came, he trusted he should be able satisfactorily to prove that the Bill did not repeal the Act of Supremacy.

Sir R. H. INGLIS said, he hoped he was as incapable of misrepresenting the right hon. Baronet, as of endeavouring to mislead the House. But he believed that the recollection of the House would go with him when he re-asserted, that the right hon. Baronet, although he had not said that he adopted the Bill of the hon. and learned Gentleman—and perhaps he (Sir R. Inglis) ought to apologise for having put those words in the right hon. Baronet's mouth—he believed that the recollection of the House would go with him when he re-asserted, that the right hon. Baronet had stated, that if the Bill were the same in substance as that of last year, a similar Bill, (he believed that the words were, "a Bill as comprehensive,") had been brought forward by Her Majesty's Government in the other House of Parliament. If he had misunderstood the right hon. Baronet, he would be ready to apologise to him. But the right hon. Baronet had stated, that the Bill of last year would not repeal the Act of Supremacy. He, however, pledged himself, that this was a prominent point in the Bill of the hon. and learned Gentleman; and it was as prominent a point, if he were not mistaken, in the Bill introduced into the other House by the Lord Chancellor.

Lord J. MANNERS said, that it would perhaps be more convenient that the right hon. Baronet should state whether the penalties affecting the regular Roman Catholic clergy were retained in the Bill introduced into the House of Lords. [Sir J. Graham: When the Bill comes in, I will explain it.] When the proper time should have arrived, he would be perfectly ready, although exceedingly sorry, to meet his hon. Friend the Member for the University of Oxford upon the provisions in question. He could not conceive that the Church of England could derive any benefit from penal Statutes against the regular Roman Catholic clergy. He agreed with his hon. Friend, that there were many safeguards which the Church of England had a right to demand. He thought she had a right to demand to have perfect freedom to increase her resources with the increase of our population; he thought she had a right to demand that her ancient landmarks should not be swept away, or the number of her livings decreased. But he did not think that the Church of England could be benefited by retaining penalties which were not only alien to the spirit of Christian charity, but which the Governments which had imposed them had never had the cruelty to enforce. It was perfectly notorious that there had been enacted against religious bodies in this country, penalties which no one would wish to see carried into effect. He was sure that no one would wish to interfere with the Christian Brothers, for instance, or with the Cistercian Monks—men who devoted their lives to the improvement of their fellow-creatures.

Mr. O'CONNELL hoped, that this Bill would not be withdrawn, or left in the hands of Government; but that it would be permitted to be read a first time, and in due course they would find whether the Bill referred to by the right hon. Baronet was essentially the same. Singular, indeed, it was, that at this time of day, that House should be called on to decide whether the exercise of the priestly office was to be made penal by Act of Parliament—whether a devoted attachment to religious exercises, the abandonment of worldly cares, and the salvation of the souls of such individuals, as well as the souls of others—were things that the people of England wished to have punished by legal enactment. They had come to a curious period of the world's history. Who had not heard of persecutions of a most atrocious kind—of cruelties of the most hor-

rible nature—inflicted on the helpless nuns of Minsk? The monster tyrant who could thus basely and foully commit such outrages on those estimable ladies, was an object of loathing; and it was not creditable to the Christians of Europe, that some public demonstration had not been made to express the horror and detestation of all civilized Christendom against the monster and his satellites who had perpetrated such enormities. What was the principle of the law in this country as it stood? It was the same principle as that upon which the tyrant of Russia had acted. There was no punishment by our law for the Atheist—none for the Deist: it was all reserved for the sincerely pious and the benevolently humane. To visit virtue and charity with penalties and punishment, was a most anti-Christian proceeding. He felt bound to thank the right hon. Home Secretary and the Government for the excellence of their intentions; and he hoped that their Bill would be found so good as to supersede that of his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Kinsale.

Lord J. RUSSELL, allusion having been made to him, wished to say a few words as to his former declaration, that he was not ready at once to repeal these laws without consideration. Last Session he had voted for the Committee, but he had reserved to himself the right of weighing the details. It appeared to him that there was one part of the question that had not been sufficiently attended to: the measure of Government, as far as it was stated last year, did not effect that relief to the Roman Catholics from a law by which they were punished, both for assuming episcopal titles in Ireland, and for belonging to certain religious orders. That part of the subject required interference by the Legislature. As to preventing persons assuming particular titles, nothing could be more absurd and puerile than to keep up such a distinction. He had also the strongest objection to the law which made Jesuits in certain cases liable to transportation: the enactment was as intolerant as it was inefficacious, and it was fit that the law should be put on an intelligible and rational footing. Whether it would be expedient to repeal that part of the law which restricted monastic orders, or whether some security ought not to be required from them similar to that given by Protestant Dissenters, viz., that they should be registered and subjected to the inspection, if you will, of Roman Catholic visitors, was a great question he was not yet prepared to answer. What had happened in various countries in respect to these religious orders was well known. They were not attacked because they professed particular tenets, but because they actually interfered with the politics of the State in which they were established. He was prepared to say that severe penalties ought not to be threatened which no person and no Government would venture to execute.

Bill brought in and read a first time.

THE RECENT RESIGNATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT.

Mr. BANKES rose to move for—

"Returns of all applications for the Stewardship or Stewardships of the Chiltern Hundreds received from any Member or Members of Parliament by the Government during the present Session, with the date of such application, and date of the appointment, where such applications have been complied with.

"Of all applications made to Government by Members of Parliament for appointments to offices of the like nature with the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, being appointments applied for with the view of vacating the Seats of the Applicants, and the dates of such appointments, where the applications have been complied with.

"Of the particular Forms of Grants of the Stewardship or Stewardships of the Chiltern Hundreds and of other Grants of the like nature, and of the Time necessarily occupied in completing the same, when such Grants are made."

The hon. Member spoke as follows:—I rise to address the House on a subject of some importance as it respects the operation of the representative system. It appears that there is a power in the Government (which I am sure I do not pretend to say has been on the present occasion abused)—but as to the exercise of which I think inquiry is demanded—it appears that there is a power in the Government of delaying or accelerating the issue of writs when Members have accepted offices which occasion the vacating of their seats. I was informed last week by general rumour (having had no other means of information), that two seats for the county which I have the honour to represent were vacant; and I have since had reason to believe it is true; but up to this period the writs have not been moved for. My hon. Friend Mr. Miles the other night asked some explanation on the subject; and it then appeared, that though the office which could occasion vacancies had been applied for, the Government writs had not been made out so as to justify the moving for the writs. Now, at this particular period, when a very important question is coming on, it is a matter

of some consequence to the county, that two seats should be vacant. The result must be, so far as I can anticipate, that two of the votes of that county cannot be given on the first division that is likely to take place. I have no right in any degree to anticipate how those votes would be given when the Members were returned; but I have a right to say it is a hardship on the county to be deprived of those two votes, whichever way they would be given. Had these writs been moved for on Monday (I am not assuming it was possible they should have been), by this day se'nnight—the day on which it is most probable a division will take place—those two Members would have been here. But, the writ being moved for to-night or to-morrow, it is impossible such a result should take place. According to every ordinary calculation, giving fair allowance for long speeches and several nights' debates, it is hardly now possible that the two Members for Dorsetshire should attend the House on the first division in the approaching debate. I have, therefore, felt it my duty to bring this subject before the House. In doing so, I by no means intend to impute blame to any one. As to my two hon. Friends, the late Members for the county, I have a right to say, that had I arrived at the same opinion as I understand they have arrived at, I should have felt bound to pursue the same course as they have taken; because, though I came into the House with no pledges, so that I need not consider myself the delegate of any man, yet, under the circumstances of the late election—taken as it was, and known to be taken, with reference to this particular question, I certainly should have felt, as it appears my hon. Friends have felt, that the declarations then made, did raise expectations—which expectations if I could not conscientiously satisfy by my votes—would have compelled me to resign into my constituents' hands the trust which they had committed into my charge, and to desire them to place it in the hands of some one whose opinions were more in accordance with their own. I cannot, therefore, feel at all surprised at the course pursued by my two hon. Friends, my late colleagues in the representation of the county. And I am convinced it must be their wish that the county should not be deprived of their two votes on the important occasion I allude to. Whether the constituency may re-elect my two late hon. colleagues, I cannot pretend to say. But this I claim for the county, the right of having its two votes at the earliest possible period. I wish especially to know—as the information would be peculiarly valuable under existing circumstances—what is the earliest period at which, in regular course of procedure, the writ can be moved for after the occurrence of such vacancies. And I can venture to say, there could be no better rule adopted for the future than this: that the Member of the Government who grants the offices referred to, should be responsible for moving that the writs be issued. For at present it appears that no party is responsible, even supposing the grant is made. How can the public at large know of any such grant having been applied for? The consequence is, that (without imputing blame to any one) the writ may be delayed, and the constituencies deprived of that representation to which they are by law entitled. It is under these circumstances I am induced to submit my Motion to the House for the production of Papers which may perhaps explain a matter of no small importance.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, that so far from being opposed to the Motion of his hon. Friend, he had brought down to the House a Paper containing all the information required by his Motion, and that Paper he was ready to lay on the Table of the House, in order that there might be no delay. He (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had always acted while in office according to what he believed to be the uniform custom—namely, to consent to every application for the office of steward for the Chiltern Hundreds, when he had ascertained that such application came from the Member himself. Under such circumstances, the office was always granted without hesitation, and he had acted upon what had been the invariable custom; but in consequence of what had fallen from his hon. Friend, he (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) would add, that he never felt that the duty devolved upon the Government of obtaining a new writ when such an office was granted. If the Government were responsible, and if that power of obtaining a new writ was confined solely to it, he was of opinion that the possession of such a power would be likely to lead to great abuses—to abuses which he had no doubt his hon. Friend (Mr. G. Bankes) would be one of the first to object to. The manner of granting the office of steward of the Chiltern Hundreds was, by the com-

pletion of an instrument, conferring that office on an individual; and although it might sometimes happen that delay took place in completing that instrument, yet it would be seen by the Paper which he held in his hand, that no such delay took place with respect to the cases to which his hon. Friend had alluded. With reference to a question which had been put on a former night, relative to Lord Ashley, he would state that the office of steward of the Chiltern Hundreds could not be given twice on the same day; and when it had been given to an individual, and that another applied on the same day, it was necessary to call in the aid of another stewardship. He hoped that his hon. Friend saw the inexpediency of forcing such a responsibility on the Chancellor of the Exchequer. With reference to the case of Lord Ashley, he had not been able to give an answer to the question put by the hon. Member for Somersetshire (Mr. W. Miles), at the moment the question was put, because as the Chiltern Hundreds could only be conferred once on the same day, it was necessary, when applications were so frequent, to call in aid other stewardships; so that he had been unable to state the precise office which had been granted to Lord Ashley. He, however, trusted the House would not impute to him any blame in these transactions, which, he repeated, had been conducted according to established practice.

Sir W. MOLESWORTH could not avoid expressing as his opinion that it would be better to get rid of all these forms of applying for and obtaining the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, and to leave Members at liberty at once, when they so thought fit, to resign their seats.

Mr. WILLIAMS was of opinion, that the inquiry which the hon. Member opposite was desirous of instituting, might be carried still farther, for it was most desirable that the particulars of some recent resignations should be laid before the country; and it was also most essential for them to know if it were true that, in contravention of the orders of that House, any Peer or Peers had interfered, or used influence, in returning Representatives to sit there. He could name a Gentleman who held one of the highest offices of the Government, and whose constituents for the last fifteen years had been perfectly satisfied with his conduct in Parliament. That Gentleman had been recently appointed to the high office to which he had alluded; but he was not again returned by the constituency which he had represented for fifteen years. What prevented that Gentleman's return by his former constituency? Every individual in the country knew—every newspaper in the country stated—that he was not again returned in consequence of the interference of a Member of the other House of Parliament; and that his return was so prevented in consequence of his support of the liberal and enlightened measures which had been proposed by the Government. He would say that an inquiry ought to be instituted into these circumstances. The House of Commons ought, in justice to its own character, to inquire into the influences which were used to send Members to that assembly, and to ascertain if it was true that Members of the other House sent Representatives to the House of Commons, not for the purpose of attending to the interests of the country, but for the purpose of attending to the private interests of those Peers themselves. They ought to ascertain if any such influence had been used in order to prevent the return of a Gentleman, because he was favourable to the enlightened measure which had been recently brought forward by the Government for the good of the country. If the House of Commons truly represented the people, they would not sit quiet for one day until an inquiry had been established into those flagrant abuses and violations of the Orders of that House. He regretted that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had come down with the Returns in his hand, for he should have been desirous for additional returns; and, indeed, he thought that their information could not be considered complete without a Committee of Inquiry, which might enable them to sift the selfish views that opposed hon. Gentlemen who preferred supporting liberal and enlightened policy to any private interests.

Motion agreed to; the Returns were forthwith brought up, and ordered to lie on the Table and to be printed.

BONE-CRUSHING IN WORKHOUSES.

Mr. CHRISTIE moved for copies of any Papers or Reports by Mr. Chadwick, Secretary to the Poor Law Commissioners, by Mr. Parker, late Assistant-Commissioner, or by any other Assistant-Commissioner, on the subject of bone-crushing in Union workhouses; and in doing so, he referred to passages in Mr. Parker's letter addressed to Sir J. Graham, for the purpose of showing that such representations had been made both by Mr. Chadwick and

Mr. Parker. Of course, he (Mr. Christie) could not state precisely the proper names which the Papers or Reports bore in which these representations appeared; but he trusted the Government would not, on that account, refuse to lay them on the Table.

Sir J. GRAHAM said, he was not aware when he spoke yesterday, that there were any such documents of the nature of those which the hon. Member had described; but in consequence of what the hon. Member had then stated, he had, in the course of that morning, made inquiries of the Poor Law Commissioners, and it did appear that there was a paper by Mr. Chadwick, in the nature of a memorandum, unsigned, but it was quite of a confidential nature, and intended entirely for the consideration of the Commissioners. He (Sir J. Graham) therefore hoped that the hon. Gentleman would not press for the production of the documents referred to; for it was impossible that public business could be conducted without differences occasionally occurring between superior authorities and the officers in their employment, and all public confidence would be destroyed if such documents were not to be considered of a confidential nature. He begged to say, therefore, that he could not consent to lay on the Table the Papers moved for.

Mr. CHRISTIE: The right hon. Baronet has said nothing about the paper by Mr. Parker.

Sir J. GRAHAM replied, that the paper by Mr. Parker consisted of a mere memorandum on the back of certain other papers, which expressed an opinion that bone-crushing was not a good employment for the poor of the workhouses. Mr. Chadwick's paper was a more recent production; but both were alike of a confidential character.

Mr. CHRISTIE remarked, that though the documents were refused, he was glad to find from the statement of the right hon. Baronet, that it was made clear that both Mr. Chadwick and Mr. Parker had remonstrated against the practice of bone-crushing in workhouses.

Sir J. GRAHAM: I did not say that they remonstrated against the practice; but merely that they had expressed an opinion.

Motion withdrawn.

House adjourned at seven o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Friday, February 6, 1846.

Minutes.] Public Bills.—1ª. Administration of Criminal Justice.

Petitions Presented. From Owners and Occupiers of Land, and others interested in the welfare of Agriculture in the Parish of Capel St. Mary, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.

PETITION OF MR. GRAHAM.

Lord BEAUMONT, seeing the noble Earl the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in his place, wished to call his attention to a subject in relation to which he had presented a petition to their Lordships in the course of last week. The petition was from Mr. H. Graham, who complained that while travelling in Italy, after having had his passport properly *visé* at Marseilles, he was nevertheless compulsorily detained by the police of the Sardinian Government at Nice; that he was detained there twenty-four hours; and when his passport was returned no explanation was given further than that his name was Graham. Since that period he had received neither apology nor indemnification for the loss he had sustained by his detention: and the only reason for it which was known to him was, that he bore the odious name of Graham—odious, he meant, in Sardinia. As he understood the noble Earl had thought it his duty to correspond with the Sardinian Government upon the subject, he begged to ask him whether there was any prospect of Mr. Graham being indemnified for his detention, or of any apology being made for it?

The Earl of ABERDEEN, in reply, said he had had some correspondence with the Sardinian Government upon this subject, and also with the gentleman to whom the noble Lord alluded. It was perfectly true that it was in consequence of his name that this gentleman had been subjected to the inconvenience which had been described. There was no better name in Britain than that which this gentleman had the good fortune to bear; at the same time no name was so good as necessarily to preserve those who bore it from occasionally disgracing it. In the present case it appeared that some person of the name of Graham had been guilty of a very extensive system of forgery and swindling in Belgium, and that the Belgian Government considered it their duty to follow him over different parts of Europe. The Sardinian Government was desired by the Belgian Government to take care of persons of this name. At Nice this gentleman appeared with a regular passport he (the Earl of Aberdeen) believed; but the commissary of police detained him for twenty-four hours in his hotel. Afterwards, when

the mistake was discovered, the gentleman's carriage-money was paid, in order to make amends for the loss he had sustained—the only loss he (the Earl of Aberdeen) had heard of—the loss of his carriage-money, from Nice to Genoa. He was only detained twenty-four hours. The gentleman so detained, in consequence of the mistake in the name of Graham, had claimed a pecuniary indemnity for the insult; but he (the Earl of Aberdeen) confessed it did not appear to him that he should be justified, under the circumstances, in making any claim on the Sardinian Government for pecuniary indemnification. Had Mr. Graham been a mechanic or an artisan, possibly something of the kind might have been done; but as the mistake had been so perfectly explained, and as no intention whatever existed of inflicting any injury or insult upon him, he (the Earl of Aberdeen) thought there was no reason to make a claim for pecuniary indemnification. Under these circumstances, and with this explanation, he had informed Mr. Graham that he could make no such effort.

Lord BEAUMONT begged to ask the noble Earl whether the Sardinian Government had tendered any apology?

The Earl of ABERDEEN replied in the negative. An explanation had been received, but no direct apology, the omission of which he regretted, for he thought an apology was due. At the same time, judging from the style of this gentleman's letters, he could readily believe that the personal communication which had taken place between him (Mr. Graham) and the Sardinian authorities, did not tend much to render them very ready to make an apology, which under other circumstances he supposed they would have done.

RAILWAY BILLS.

First Report of the Select Committee on Railway Bills considered and agreed to.

The Earl of DALHOUSIE said, he rose to move an alteration in the Standing Order No. 224, of which he had given notice last night. In submitting to their Lordships, the other evening, a statement with regard to the amount of railway business likely to come before this and the other House of Parliament, he had endeavoured to set before them the difficulties of dealing with the subject during the present Session. These difficulties were of a twofold character. One difficulty was, the apparent impossibility of finding Committees sufficiently numerous to transact all the railway business before the House, or, at all events, sufficiently numerous to transact it with satisfaction to the country; and the other difficulty arose from the gigantic amount of capital involved in the schemes to be brought forward. The Committee appointed by their Lordships met immediately after their appointment, and they had met almost daily since that time. They had considered the subject closely, upon such information as could be furnished to them in the present stage of the proceedings. It appeared to the Committee, in the first place, that it was in their power to suggest such alterations in the mode of transacting business between the two Houses of Parliament as would facilitate the despatch of business, be extremely convenient to those interested, and at the same time be conducive to the interests of the public. Their Lordships were aware that, according to invariable practice, all Railway Bills commenced in the other House, the disadvantage of which had been felt by the public, and certainly very much by their Lordships. The necessary effect had been that for the first two or three months of the Session their Lordships had been left without employment for their Committees; and, on the other hand, they had been overwhelmed by the number of Bills heaped upon them all at once towards the close of the Session. Their Lordships had, in consequence, been blamed for their apparent idleness at the commencement of the Session, in not transacting business which in fact was not then sent up to them; and at the end they were equally blamed for the apparent haste and slovenliness with which they had disposed of the business when they got it, and which must be discussed with speed, if it were to be transacted at all. The result of the consideration of their Lordships' Select Committee on Railways had therefore been to recommend to their Lordships such an alteration of the Standing Orders as had become necessary, in order to meet the arrangements made for the purpose of facilitating business with advantage to the public interests. Their Lordships would see by the Votes that the Committee of the other House, appointed for a similar purpose to their Lordships' Committee, had reported a recommendation, that during the present Session a certain portion of Railway Bills should have their commencement in their Lordships' House. It then became a matter of consideration what would be a convenient division to make; and it appeared that

Railway Bills connected with Ireland, should be considered by their Lordships' House in the first instance, inasmuch as it presented a broad line of demarcation, which did not admit of a doubt as to the Bills which should fall under that particular class. He was sure that there was no noble Lord who would not feel that at the present moment there were additional reasons for giving every facility for providing means of employment in Ireland, and that it was desirable, therefore, that all the Railway Bills which Parliament should think proper to pass for Ireland, during the present Session, should pass as speedily as possible. The Committee of the House of Commons had accordingly recommended that all Irish Railway Bills should have their origin in their Lordships' House during the present Session. At this point, however, a peculiar difficulty arose. Previous to last Session, and in last Session, the amount of the deposit required was 5 per cent. upon the subscribed capital. In the other House, however, previous to the close of last Session, an alteration in the Standing Orders was proposed, requiring a deposit of 10 per cent.; but with respect to all Railway Bills which were provisionally registered, or where certain other steps had been taken previous to the 29th of July an exception was made, and in such cases 5 per cent. deposit only was required. A similar alteration of the Standing Orders was proposed in their Lordships' House; but their Lordships, by a distinct manifestation of opinion, refused to accede, and the consequence was that their Lordships required with respect to every Railway Bill, without distinction, a deposit of 10 per cent. during this Session. Now, a very large portion of the Irish Railway Bills fell within the exception of the House of Commons, and were admissible there on the payment of 5 per cent. deposit. It would therefore be hard on the promoters of those Bills that they should be compelled to commence in that House, and then should be refused admission there on the same terms as they were admissible in the House of Commons. Their Lordships' Committee, therefore, recommended such an alteration of the Standing Orders as, while it virtually fulfilled the condition which their Lordships required, of the payment of a deposit of 10 per cent., would nevertheless, by a slight alteration, place the promoters of these Bills in the same position as they would now stand in were they introduced into the House of Commons. The Committee, therefore, recommended that no Railway Bill whatever, should be read a first time, unless 5 per cent. deposit should have been paid on or before the 6th of February; and that no such Bill should be read a third time unless a further deposit of 5 per cent. should be paid; thus making the whole deposit 10 per cent., the amount required by the Standing Order of their Lordships' House. He had been informed that this recommendation of the Committee had appeared to some to be at variance with the course contemplated by the House when the Committee was appointed; and that it was, in point of fact, holding out additional encouragement to railway speculation. This was an entire mistake, as their Lordships would perceive on looking at the matter for a single moment. By admitting Irish Railway Bills for consideration in their Lordships' House on the payment of 5 per cent. deposit, their Lordships were not giving to them any additional advantage beyond that which they would have enjoyed had they gone to the other House of Parliament; for all these Railway Bills were admissible there on the payment of 5 per cent. deposit. No such Bill would be admissible in their Lordships' House until the deposit of 5 per cent. should be made. Neither would there be any extension of time for the payment of this deposit, by transferring the Bills to this House; because, according to the proposed alteration of the Standing Order, their Lordships would not admit such Bills as he had referred to unless the deposit of 5 per cent. should have been paid on or before the 6th of February, that being the same day on or before which the other House of Parliament required the deposit to be made. The alteration of the Standing Order, so far as not to require the whole 10 per cent. deposit until the third reading of the Bills, was not any actual relaxation of their Lordships' rule, but was, in point of fact, merely an alteration of time, and did not give any additional facility for railway speculation; as, in the ordinary course of things, had these Bills been introduced into the House of Commons, the payment of the 10 per cent. deposit would not have been required until about the middle of the Session, when the Bills would have reached their Lordships' House, while in most cases the payment of the 10 per cent. deposit would, under the proposed alteration, be required earlier. Under all these circumstances, looking at the very great amount of business before Parliament, the great benefit

which would be conferred upon the public by adjusting that amount of business between the two Houses; considering the importance of providing employment for the people of Ireland as early as possible; considering also that in thus proceeding they were not holding out any facilities whatever to additional speculation—that, in point of fact, all that the proposed alterations did, was to facilitate the progress of Bills through their Lordships' House, when they should have found their way there, after having complied with the conditions imposed upon their admission; but that it did not give encouragement to the creation of new railway projects, and removed no obstacle to undue speculation which that House had imposed—he did trust the House would make the proposed alteration. There was another class of Bills which the Select Committee of the other House recommended should commence in their Lordships' House. These were certain Bills with respect to which the understanding was, that as they were suspended in their progress during last Session, from want of time, they should be taken up in the present Session in the other House, and pass through there as a matter of course, and come up to their Lordships at an early time for consideration; but there were other Bills competing with these which had failed in the other House from non-compliance with the Standing Orders, or other reasons, but which had made their appearance again in the present Session. It would, therefore, be a manifest contradiction for their Lordships to be considering in their House one class of Bills, while the House of Commons and its Committee might be, at the same time, considering others immediately competing with them. The Select Committee of the House of Commons had got rid of the difficulty by recommending that all these competing Bills should be considered in the first instance in their Lordships' House; and the Standing Orders of their Lordships House which he now proposed would consequently apply to them. He had now stated the substance of the proceedings of their Lordships' Committee on these points; but with respect to another branch of the subject, he was not able to say that the Committee had yet come to any decision. They had considered the question as put before them generally, but until the period for the presentation of petitions had expired, they could not effectively or properly deal with this particular subject. If they had determined upon it now, when the period for the admission of Bills into their Lordships' House arrived, they would then have the whole work to do over again, inasmuch as many of the Bills would probably not make their appearance. When they were in a condition to know what they had to deal with, the Committee would come to that conclusion which they deemed right. In conclusion, he begged to move that their Lordships do agree to the following Resolutions of the Select Committee:—

"Resolved—That such portion of the Standing Order No. 224, as requires from the Promoters of Railway Bills a deposit of one-tenth of the amount subscribed, should be suspended with respect to all such Railway Bills as shall commence in the House of Lords during the present Session. That no such Railway Bill shall be read a first time in this House, unless a deposit of one-twentieth part of the amount subscribed shall have been made on or before the 6th February, and no such Railway Bill shall be read a third time until a further deposit of one-twentieth part of the amount subscribed shall in like manner be made."

Lord MONTEAGLE said, he had by no means any intention of objecting to the Motion of his noble Friend; it was, indeed, impossible that he should do so, as the proposition had been made by himself in the last Session; but he wished, before the Question was put, to offer a few remarks on the subject of the alterations proposed to be made. There was so much of liability to misapprehension with respect to the proceedings of the Legislature, more especially as far as Ireland was concerned, that he would, with their Lordships' permission, claim one or two minutes of their attention in explaining the motives by which the Committee had been influenced. He was not about to discuss the policy involved in the question, as arising from the necessity of increasing inland communication in Ireland by means of railways; but he would solely confine himself to the effect which the execution of these great works would have on the labour market in the present contingency of affairs in that country. If the alterations now proposed in the Standing Orders were not made, no one of the Irish Railway Bills would, in all probability, receive the Royal Assent until late in June or July next, at the very earliest. Now, however important it might be that these Bills should pass at any period of the Session, it was clear that if they did not pass through Parliament before that time, they would be utterly useless, so far as the employment of the

people was involved in the present period of scarcity. The object of the Committee was, not only to give the promoters of these Railway Bills a pre-audience, as far as that House was concerned, but also to enable them to proceed with the works at as early a period as possible. Therefore, the Resolutions proposed by his noble Friend were deserving of the approval, not only of their Lordships, but of all who were desirous of giving employment and consequently money wages to the labouring population of Ireland. He trusted that those who were concerned in Irish Railway Bills would feel that, as far as the alterations in the Standing Orders were concerned, they not only had no reason to complain, but that their position would, in point of fact, be greatly improved in coming before the Legislature. There was one effect of these Standing Orders to which his noble Friend had not alluded—namely, the advantage of allowing the promoters of Railway Bills to prove simultaneously their compliance with the Standing Orders of both Houses of Parliament. That, he thought, was a great advantage. Hitherto, the promoters of Railway Bills were obliged to bring witnesses, perhaps from the farthest parts of Ireland or Scotland—from every place between the Land's End and John o'Groat's House, to prove compliance with a set of formal Orders before the House of Commons; and at a future period of the Session they were obliged to bring up the same witnesses again to prove a similar matter in the House of Lords. It would, he thought, be a question for their Lordships' consideration, whether, in respect of the future, this arrangement might not be made permanent; and whether the Standing Orders of both Houses of the Legislature might not be fixed on the authority of an Act of Parliament. The question of compliance or non-compliance might then be considered before the Session commenced, before some proper tribunal; and the Bills would thus be brought under the notice of Parliament without two successive tedious preliminary inquiries. It might be objected that the course which he proposed would tend to the giving of undue encouragement to railway speculation; but their Lordships ought to endeavour to discourage such speculation, not by augmenting expenses, or by throwing technical difficulties in the way of the passing of Bills through the House, but rather by examining with discrimination what Bills they allowed to pass. They might as well expect to prevent improper litigation by augmenting the expenses incurred in the courts of law, as to prevent speculation by increasing the difficulties of passing Bills. Before sitting down, he could not avoid again expressing his belief that there could scarcely have been committed any greater mistake than the course adopted with regard to railway deposits in the present year; he could imagine nothing more indefensible than, after permitting all parties to invest the money paid as deposits on railway shares in Government securities, to refuse permitting them to make their deposits, in the first instance, with the Accountant General in those very public funds which were accepted as their ultimate security. He knew it had been thought that any relaxation of this rule would give a benefit to railway proprietors, and that its enforcement was therefore a sort of punishment for over-speculation. But that argument was founded on an entire misapprehension of all the facts. The punishment—if it were to be called such—did not fall on railway proprietors, but on bankers and on parties connected with the mercantile interests of the country, by whom it had been felt as a very great grievance. He was informed by the conductors of one great banking establishment, that owing to the system prescribed in respect to these railway deposits, at a time when they were in possession of no less a sum than 2,000,000*l.* in Exchequer Bills, they were required to make a lodgment of 1,100,000*l.* to the credit of the Accountant General for railroad deposits, which sum was afterwards to be invested in Government securities; but instead of being allowed to hand over that amount in Exchequer bills, they were obliged to pay the amount in money, though that very money had immediately afterwards to be re-invested in the same security. He was convinced that if the attention of Parliament had been called to this subject in the course of last Session, the proposition to receive stock or Exchequer bills in lieu of money could not have failed to meet its immediate and unqualified approval. But the law as it now stood had produced a most severe pressure, not upon those parties whom Parliament might seek to restrain from speculation, but upon third parties, many of whom were wholly unconnected with railway projects. The result was, that mercantile accommodation had necessarily been considerably limited, and that

the operations of the Bank had been thrown into great doubt and uncertainty. This confusion had arisen from their unfortunate legislation. He did not make any complaint against the Government with reference to this subject. It was the fault of legislation, and he hoped that mistaken legislation would speedily be amended, for he could not conceive anything more mischievous to the mercantile classes than the existing system.

The Earl of STRADBROKE said, although there was no probability, or, he believed, even possibility, of anything approaching to a famine being witnessed in this country, in Scotland, or in the North of Ireland, still there was great danger of famine extending in the south of Ireland. He, therefore, thought that the Railway Bills connected with that portion of the country, where employment would be most needed, ought to be first proceeded with.

Resolutions agreed to.

"Ordered—That this House will not receive any Petition for a Railway Bill after Monday the 23rd of this Instant, February."

BURDENS ON REAL PROPERTY.

Lord BEAUMONT gave notice that he would, on an early day next week, move for the appointment of a Committee to inquire into the burdens affecting real property.

Lord CAMPBELL said, he wished to be allowed to suggest, respectfully, that the example set by the Committees of the two Houses of Parliament with respect to the railway business might be followed by Her Majesty's Government in the case of other Bills. The Committee to which he alluded had suggested that certain Railway Bills should be brought forward in the first instance in the House of Lords, and it would be most advantageous if some of the many measures of a general nature intended to be brought forward by Her Majesty's Government were also introduced in their Lordships' House. At present their Lordships generally met merely to adjourn; whereas towards the end of the Session they would have more business upon their hands than any length of sitting would enable them satisfactorily to get through.

The Duke of WELLINGTON said, his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) had made a somewhat similar suggestion on the previous evening, which he (the Duke of Wellington) had already laid before the proper authorities, and he would take care to treat the suggestion of the noble and learned Lord with the same attention.

The LORD CHANCELLOR said, he had already laid one Bill on the Table of the House, the second reading of which had been postponed for a few days, in order to afford time for considering its provisions. He had also a second Bill ready, namely, one for the management of Charities and Religious Trusts—a subject with which his noble Friend was fully cognizant; and he would lose no time in bringing it forward, so that his noble and learned Friend might have an opportunity of amusing himself in conning it over.

Lord CAMPBELL said, if he were to sit up all night he could not read the number of Bills that were crowded on their Lordships' Table in the month of July. It was not, therefore, any wish for employment, but a feeling of the impossibility of properly getting through the business usually brought before their Lordships towards the close of the Session, that induced him to offer the suggestion.

The LORD CHANCELLOR said, his noble and learned Friend knew well how to employ his leisure. He had lately favoured them with a book full of entertainment and instruction, by which he had greatly enhanced his own reputation, and conferred an important benefit on the community; and if he continued to devote his leisure hours to similar labours, the public would certainly not have much cause to regret his want of other employment.

Lord CAMPBELL rose and bowed amidst loud cheers from all parts of the House.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, February 6, 1846.

Minutes.] New Writ. For Suffolk (Eastern Division), *v.* Lord Henniker, Chiltern Hundreds.

Petitions Presented. From Liverpool, Penrith, Lancaster, and Wigton, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From James Haughton, against raising Revenue on Intoxicating Drinks.—From Elton (8 Petitions), in favour of the Factories Bill.—From Westbourne, Rye, Eaglesham, and Ilminster, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.

RAILWAYS.

Lord G. SOMERSET rose to call the attention of the House to the first Report of the Select Committee appointed to consider the mode in which the House should deal with Railway Bills in the present Session. Two points had to be brought under consideration. In the first place, with regard to Irish Railway Bills, it was the opinion of the Committee that great

facility would be afforded to them by having them considered first in the House of Lords; if one of those Bills originated in the House of Commons, and another in the House of Lords, it might not be possible properly to consider one Bill until the other arrived from the House in which it was introduced. In the next place, with regard to those Bills which had reached a certain point last Session, but were prevented from receiving the consideration of the other House, it was thought that, though the number was very small, it was of great importance to the parties to retain their privilege of not having to go through all their evidence again before the House of Commons, and, at the same time, it would be very unfair if any rival Bills now introduced were not to be considered in the House of Lords at the same time. In the case of this class of Bills, therefore, as well as the Irish Bills, the Committee recommended that facility be granted by their being introduced into the House of Lords at once. As to any other Bills, the Committee gave no opinion. These two classes had seemed entitled to a separate consideration. In the case of the Irish Bills the Committee felt that there was so great a demand for employment, that it was right to facilitate their passing speedily. The noble Lord then moved the further consideration of the Report brought up on the previous evening.

Mr. FITZSTEPHEN FRENCH said, he wished to offer a few words to the House on the subject of the Motion of the noble Lord, which appeared to him particularly to affect two classes of Railway Bills—namely, Irish Bills, and such as in this country were in the same class as the London and York Bill. In these cases it was proposed by the plan suggested, that they should commence in the House of Lords. Now he objected to that first part of the Resolution which rendered it compulsory on the promoters of such measures as had completed all their arrangements for proceeding before the House of Commons, to commence their Parliamentary course in the Lords. He did not see why the Irish Bills should meet with any particular favour or encouragement over English or Scotch Bills; neither could he conceive why Irish Bills should be placed in any situation different from that of English and Scotch Bills. He did not want this announcement made with such a flourish of trumpets that Irish business was to be given a greater facility than any other, and that this would be advantageous for Ireland. He denied that there was any substantial advantage to be derived from the proposed change. It appeared to him that this putting the Irish Bills first into the House of Lords would not facilitate their passing. He wished to ask the noble Lord, whether it would be necessary, before any Bill went through the House of Lords, for the promoters of it to show that the Standing Orders of the House of Commons had been complied with. He found in the Report, that after a Bill, having originated in the House of Lords, had been brought down to the Commons, and read a first time, it was recommended that it should be referred to the Committee on Petitions to ascertain whether it had or not substantially complied with the Standing Orders of the Commons. He would be glad to know what a substantial compliance with the Standing Orders meant. There was a difference in the practice of both Houses with respect to the proofs of compliance. The services of notices, lodgment of plans and sections, and all that was preliminary, might be proved in one place by the certificate of an assistant barrister. That was not the case in the other respect; but in many cases forty or fifty people had to be brought, at an immense expense, to prove that which ought to be admitted upon producing an affidavit sworn before a judge. This was the point wherein a material benefit might be conferred upon Ireland, and here was a matter to which the attention of the Legislature had never properly directed itself, but which would be calculated to do great service to the people of Ireland. He had before suggested the expediency of doing something to meet this evil, but it had not been taken up as he wished.

Mr. BERNAL said, the labours of the Committees were only in their infancy, or perhaps merely yet in parturition. He rather approved of the proposition contained in the Resolutions with respect to those Bills which were to be originated in the House of Lords, and felt inclined to waive any objections of a technical character which he might otherwise have felt towards the adoption of such a course. But with respect to the preference which was to be given to the Irish Bills, he confessed he could see neither the justice, the advantage, the policy, nor the utility of such a mode of proceeding. There was at present a great desire in the public mind of this country to know for certain what railway projects would be perfected, and what would not. And if this plan for preferring

the Irish Railway Bills to the English and Scotch were to be proceeded in, they might do great injustice to a large portion of the community of this country. The House should recollect the large amount of deposits which was that day paid into the Bank of England—an amount which could scarcely be less than 11½ millions, exclusive of the amount to be paid on Irish and Scotch Bills; and they should consider the effect of having this large sum of money thus, as it were, locked up from the industry of the country. He confessed he was disappointed in the Report. He did not think that the English or Scotch labourers would jump at these measures for facilitating the passing of Railway Bills as such a great boon. It appeared to him a mistaken delusion to suppose that the construction of railways would give a good deal of employment to the poor. If there was such great employment to be had here in England, there would be a large influx of Irish labourers come over to compete with them. What the people of Ireland wanted most particularly was food. What he would like to see the noble Lord opposite, and the Railway Committee with whom he acted, come down to that House to propose, would be some plan for limiting the expense of English railways. There should be some means devised for lessening the enormous costs of those proceedings, which went on from day to day, from week to week, and from month to month; and this was the chief and most important consideration to which the attention of the Committee should be particularly directed.

The O'CONNOR DON hoped the House would permit him to make an observation or two, in consequence of what had fallen from his hon. Colleague. It was well known how impossible it was to satisfy every one; but he thought it only his duty, as an Irish Member, to state, in his place in the House, that both the Committee of the Lords and that of the Commons had manifested the greatest anxiety to meet the exigency at present unfortunately existing in Ireland. They both considered that it would be of great importance during the period intervening between May and August next, that provision should be made for the condition of the people through the medium of employment; and they had conceived that if, by the facilitating of Irish Railway Bills through Parliament, employment would be thus secured for the poor, it would be of much service to do so. They had felt those reasons for giving increased facility to Irish Railway Bills weigh strongly with them; but while they did so they by no means wished to throw any impediments in the progress of English or Scotch Bills. The Committee had considered then that the Irish railways might be advanced were they originated in the House of Lords. With respect to what the hon. Member who last spoke had said, about an influx of Irish labourers coming upon England, he could only observe that it would be much better for the Irish labourer to be employed at home, and near his own family, than anywhere else. He could not but feel the greatest possible sympathy and compassion with the condition of many of his poorer fellow countrymen, which, from the accounts he lately received from Sligo and other parts, must be very wretched and distressed. The reports of the prevalence of the potato disease were but too well founded. The poor labouring people of Ireland wanted only employment that would fairly remunerate them, and not any gratuitous charity. The promotion of railways would give them that, and therefore he approved of any course which might tend to that effect.

Mr. AGLIONBY said, one object was quite clear in the present Resolutions, and it was one that every Member of the House, he believed, would concur in, that it was expedient to afford every facility to the passing of Irish Railway Bills through the Legislature. But then came the question, do you give these facilities by the proposed measures? It was recommended by the Resolutions that all Irish Railway Bills should commence in the House of Lords. The hon. Member for Roscommon, who ought to know something of the matter, being an Irish Representative, said that this object of facilitating the passing of such Irish Bills would not be effected by such a course. He had been on a Railway Committee that day, before which an Irish Bill had come in its preliminary stages. He would ask the noble Lord opposite, and the Railway Committee who acted with him, would they not attain their object better by not compelling such promoters of Irish Railway Bills as were ready at present to go before the Commons, to commence in the Lords? Would it not be more advisable to allow such to commence in that House, as they were prepared to do? If it was true that it was easier to originate a Bill in the Commons than the Lords, he would ask them not to compel the adoption of the latter course.

SIR G. CLERK was at a loss to know what possible impediment was thrown in the way of an Irish Railway Bill by appointing its commencement in the Lords instead of the Commons. It was said that it would be more expensive to adopt this course, particularly with Bills which were ready to go before the House of Commons. This allegation he could not concur in. It should be recollected the length of time which should elapse between different stages of the Bill. There was another point to be considered in discussing the present question, and that was the great inconvenience and awkwardness which might result from the fact of the House of Commons giving its consent to one Bill, and the House of Lords doing the same with respect to a competing line. Now, if there was no competing line, and if a Bill was obliged to pass through the ordeal of the two Houses, no substantial injustice could be done to the parties by beginning their case before one tribunal sooner than another; and the whole of the terms of the Standing Orders of both Houses should be complied with. Under such circumstances, he considered no practical inconvenience whatever could ever arise from these propositions.

MR. ROSS suggested that all Bills which had made any progress in that House, with the exception of Bills relating to competing lines, should be allowed to be proceeded with; and that all Bills relating to competing lines, or which had not made any progress in that House, should be referred immediately to the House of Lords.

MR. GREENE said that Bills could not be placed in a worse position, by their being immediately referred to the House of Lords. Many Bills would probably be brought back from the House of Lords at as early a period as the consideration of them could be commenced in the House of Commons.

MR. COLLETT wished to remind the House that the promoters of railways could not commence the works until some months after they had obtained their Bills. He thought that the Government ought to take some means for further expediting the progress of railway business.

The first two Resolutions were agreed to :—

"1. Resolved—That with respect to any Railway Bills which shall be brought from the House of Lords during this Session, this House will not insist on their privilege with regard to the Clauses fixing and regulating rates and tolls in such Bills.

"2. Resolved—That with a view of affording early and increased means of employment in Ireland, it is expedient to give facilities for the early consideration of Irish Railway Bills; and that, for the attainment of this object, all such Railway Bills should, in the present Session, commence in the House of Lords."

The Third Resolution having been put,

MR. BECKETT DENISON thought that Resolution would, if adopted, lead to very unfair results. It was proposed by that Resolution that "all Bills which compete with, or ought to be considered in connexion with, any Bills, the promoters of which shall prove themselves entitled to the privileges agreed to be granted in certain cases by the Resolutions of this House of the 7th July last, shall commence in the House of Lords." Now, the result of that Resolution would be, that the London and York Bill, which had passed that House, would be placed in a more unfavourable position than the competing schemes which they had last year rejected; for the promoters of those competing schemes would have had an opportunity of altering their Bills since last Session, and could at once launch them in the House of Lords. In fact they would have the same privileges in the House of Lords as if they had passed the Commons in the present Session. There were at present two schemes competing with the London and York line—namely, the Direct Northern, and the lines from Cambridge to York. There were but two lines from London to York under the consideration of the Committee of that House last Session; and as that Committee had sat during eighty days, he was much afraid that the Committee of the House of Lords, which would have three projects to consider, might have to sit 120 days. But he had risen for the purpose of stating that, although he was convinced that the Select Committee had been actuated by an earnest desire to discharge their duties impartially, the Resolution then before the House might produce very unfair results.

MR. WARD believed that the Resolution would operate fairly for all parties. There had been a complaint last year that the Select Committee of that House had been unable, from want of time, to hear the whole of the evidence in the case referred to their consideration. It had been said, however, that there was a place of refuge for the discontented parties—namely, the House of Lords. The three schemes of communication between London and York were at present about to be brought before

a Committee of the Lords; and he believed that by that means justice would be best done to all the parties interested, and the advantage of the public would be best promoted. The subject was one of immense importance: the line of communication in question involved a larger outlay than any other project then before Parliament; and it was evidently desirable that it should undergo the fullest investigation.

Mr. BECKETT DENISON wished to observe, that the projects now competing with the London and York line were not the same as the projects competing with it last Session. If they had been the same, he should not on that occasion have uttered one word of complaint.

Lord G. SOMERSET believed that by that Resolution the public interest would be promoted, while ample justice would be done to all the parties interested. It was quite clear that as the other House of Parliament had not yet considered the London and York, or any of the competing schemes, they must, under any circumstances, have before them all the rival projects. His opinion was that the course proposed was the course which would be most advantageous for the promoters of the London and York line, if that line were the best. The public would also be benefited by a thorough investigation of the different proposed schemes of communication between London and York.

Sir H. W. BARRON wished to remind the House and the Government that it was impossible that the works on a line could be commenced at an earlier period than three months after a Bill had been obtained. In the first place, there must be calls made, and notices given of those calls; in the second place, possession of the ground must be got, which involved a very tedious process; and, in the third place, there must be contracts advertised, so that a considerable time would necessarily elapse before the works on any railway could be commenced. The House would, therefore, be deceived if they thought they could give employment in Ireland during the spring, or early in the summer, by passing any Railway Bill this Session in a manner consistent with the usual forms of the House; for it would then be impossible that the works could be commenced before August or September next.

The remaining Resolutions, as follows, were agreed to:—

"3. Resolved—That all Bills which compete with or ought to be considered in connexion with any Bills, the promoters of which shall prove themselves entitled to the privileges agreed to be granted in certain cases by the Resolutions of this House of the 7th July last, shall commence in the House of Lords.

"4. Resolved—That the parties promoting Railway Bills which, by the above Resolutions, are to commence in the House of Lords, may (notwithstanding any proceeding respecting such Bills in the House of Lords) prove before the Committee on Petitions of the House of Commons that they have complied with the Standing Orders of this House, and the Report of such Committee shall be ordered to lie on the Table. If the Committee should report that the Standing Orders have not been complied with, their Report shall be referred to the Committee on Standing Orders, whose Report shall be ordered to lie on the Table.

"5. Resolved—That when a Railway Bill shall have been brought from the Lords, it shall be read a first time, and referred to the Select Committee on Petitions for Private Bills, who shall report whether the Standing Orders have been complied with, or whether any Report with reference to substantially the same Bill has been previously laid on the Table of the House."

BRAZILIAN SUGAR TRADE.

Mr. LABOUCHERE repeated the question which he had put to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government yesterday, viz., whether the British Government or Legislature had taken any steps of a retaliatory nature, in consequence of the duties upon their sugar as competing with free-labour sugar which had been adopted by this country?

Sir R. PEEL: I wished to postpone giving an answer to the question when put to me yesterday, in order that in answering it I might be able to state exactly the position in which our relations stand with respect to our commercial intercourse with Brazil. In the month of January, 1845, the Brazilian Legislature passed a law which empowered the Brazilian Executive, in its discretion, to impose upon the vessels of those States which had not given the Brazilian vessels the same facilities of intercourse which were given to native vessels, discriminating duties. The Brazilian Legislature also passed a law authorizing the Government to impose discriminating duties to the prejudice of those countries which did not admit Brazilian produce on the footing of the most favoured nation. The Brazilian Executive had, by that act of the Brazilian Legislature, the power of imposing discriminating duties unfavourable to this country; but the Brazilian Government have not yet acted upon that power, and up to this period we have had no intimation of their intention to act upon it.

ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

Mr. JAMES said, he had given notice of a question which he intended to put to the Secretary of the Admiralty; but he had received a communication from that hon. Gentleman, stating that he had gone out of town, but that the right hon. Member for Ripon would be in his place and give him a reply. He begged, therefore, to ask that right hon. Baronet, whether the attention of the First Lord of the Admiralty had been directed to an electric telegraph recently invented by a scientific gentleman of the name of Knott? The machinery of this telegraph, as he understood, was of so simple a nature, was so much less complicated, and less liable to get out of order, than any other telegraph hitherto invented; and could be got, besides, at comparatively so cheap a cost, that it would be of great importance, not only to the Admiralty service, but to the interests of the country at large. He was given to understand that the late First Lord of the Treasury (Lord Haddington), after Dr. Faraday, with the principal Engineer on the London and Birmingham Railway, and other scientific gentlemen, had reported favourably of it, had given orders to the officers of the establishment over which he had control to make a special report on the subject.. Such a report, he understood, was made by Captain Brandon and General Pasley; and he wished to know whether the right hon. Gentleman would have any objection to state the nature of that report, or whether he would have any objection to lay it on the Table of the House?

Sir G. COCKBURN replied, that it was quite true that Mr. Knott did propose certain alterations or improvements in the electric telegraph, and that the Lords of the Admiralty had requested Captain Brandon and General Pasley to examine it and report upon it, which they had both done unfavourably. General Pasley considered it to be substantially on the same principle as the telegraph at present in use, but with some variations of an inferior kind. General Pasley had likewise stated that Mr. Knott appeared to be little acquainted with the principle of the telegraph, and that, therefore, it would not be wise in the Government to induce him to put himself, and certainly it would not be wise to put the country, to any additional expense on the subject.

Mr. JAMES was much obliged to the right hon. Baronet for the information. He understood, decidedly, that Dr. Faraday was in favour of Mr. Knott's improvement, and that he considered it much more simple and much less likely to get out of order than the other. If it were not so, he could only say he had been deceived.

House adjourned at seven o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, February 9, 1846.

Minutes. Public Bills.—2ª. Public Works (Ireland); Administration of Criminal Justice.

Petitions Presented. By Lord Stanley, from Swinefleet, and several other places, for Protection to Agriculture.—By Earl Grey, from Tenants, Farmers, and Agriculturists, of Forfar, for the Immediate Repeal of the Duties on Corn and Provisions; and for an Equalization of the Duties on Sugar.—By Lord Stanley, from the Chamber of Commerce of Limerick, against the Alteration of the Corn Laws, and for the Adoption of a Measure for the Immediate Relief of the Poor of Ireland.—From the Manchester Commercial Association, in favour of the Principles of Free Trade.

PUBLIC WORKS (IRELAND) BILL.

The Earl of St. GERMANS, in moving the Second Reading of this Bill, briefly explained its provisions. With respect to grants, it would place a further sum of 50,000*l.* at the disposal of the Board of Works, and provide some further facilities for making grants; and with respect to loans for drainage and other improvements, it would extend the term for repayment from three to twenty years. The Commissioners would be enabled to bring home to the very doors of the peasantry the means of profitable employment, which was the relief to be looked to in the present emergency. No man, too, could have seen the great public works executed within the last few years in Clare, Antrim, and other counties, and the effect produced by those improvements, without feeling that a more profitable investment of capital could scarcely be found. The power of consumption on the part of that country was likely thus to be incalculably increased, and the moral and social benefits to be expected should induce them to make every reasonable exertion to promote the progress of those improvements.

Lord MONTEAGLE said, it behoved Parliament not only to pass that Bill, but to enact a series of other measures which would improve permanently the condition of the people of Ireland. He had heard it stated that the pressure upon the people of that country was merely slight, and not deserving of all the consideration bestowed upon it; but he could undertake to state to their Lordships, that a more grievous mistake could not possibly exist: the magnitude of the evil and danger awaiting that country

did not seem to have come sufficiently home to their minds. The Government had not as yet presented to their Lordships the result of the investigations made into the state of distress in Ireland, although those Reports were laid before the other House of Parliament; but he was prepared to state, from his own knowledge of that country, that the condition of the people was the most appalling and distressing that he had ever had occasion to contemplate, even with reference to Ireland. The Report of Messrs. Lindley and Playfair, which was dated as far back as the 15th of November, stated that one-half of the potato crop in Ireland was either lost or altogether unfit for the consumption of man; it also stated that they feared that that was a low estimate, and they adverted to the consequences likely to ensue from a deficiency of seed for next season. Another Report was made subsequently, viz., on the 20th of January, from which the danger, so far from being diminished, appeared to be greatly aggravated. He would read one paragraph from this last Report:—

"It appears from undoubted authority, that of the thirty-two counties in Ireland, not one has escaped the failure in the potato crop; of 130 Poor Law Unions, not one is exempt; of 2,058 electoral divisions, above 1,400 are certainly reported as having suffered; and we have no certainty, until the receipt of the more minute returns now in progress of completion, that the remaining 600 have altogether escaped."

For those persons who were connected with Ireland, this matter opened anticipations of evil without example. They had to deal with the deplorable want of food in the thirty-two counties of Ireland, at the beginning of the year; and this deficiency of food would inevitably be followed by fever and other calamities. The measure just introduced to their Lordships' House he took to be one of a series which Her Majesty's Government intended to bring forward, all of which would have a tendency to act on the present state of things in Ireland. It was far from his intention to undervalue it even as a single measure; but it was most important when taken in connexion with those other measures to which the noble Lord had alluded. He was persuaded that Her Majesty's Government would not only give the distressed state of that country every consideration of which they were capable, and which the subject demanded; but that they would, with as much despatch as it was possible, make every provision they could for the exigencies of the present times. He wished, however, to call the attention of the Government to a matter connected with this question. The noble Earl had mentioned the benefits which were found to be connected with the extension of public works in Ireland. He thought that the treatment of Ireland by Parliament should, in many respects, be one of a wise and generous influence; guiding that country as one which Englishmen must admit to be younger than theirs, and without experience; and which did not know how to render all its enormous natural advantages properly available. Now, the public works undertaken in Ireland, had had the effect of developing the natural resources of that country to a great extent even already; and he must be allowed to say, that, under the system enforced since 1831, the advances made by the State in aid of public works in Ireland had been unaccompanied by any loss. The repayment of all the loans to Ireland had been most rigidly enforced, and were as punctual as they were in England. He highly approved of the accurate and rigid enforcement of the repayment of loans, for it was invariably attended with the best results to the borrowers as well as to the lenders; and he was, therefore, happy to be able to state that in Ireland, loans for public works had been punctually repaid. The effect of the employment of the people on these public works was, to civilize districts which were before almost impervious to law and order; to render the public revenue productive in districts where before smuggling and illicit distillation prevailed; to train up the people to better habits; to make them improved labourers; and in all respects to ameliorate their physical and moral condition. Now, he did not see how they could anticipate any of those salutary results from the relief proposed by Her Majesty's Government in respect of the constabulary force, the expense of which was now charged on the counties; but he wished to persuade the Government and their Lordships in favour of a different distribution of the intended relief. He would assume that the charge on the counties for the constabulary force, amounted to 190,000*l.* a year. He asked for no larger sum, but he asked for a different distribution. The Government proposal not only would act unjustly, but would act in an inverse ratio to that in which such intervention ought to act. What would be the effect of a general remission of the taxation for the constabulary fund? Take, for instance, the counties of Down

and Tipperary. The county of Down had been uniformly tranquil and peaceable, and was proportionably prosperous; and consequently the expense of the constabulary force of Down, in respect to its population, was infinitely less than that of Tipperary; which unfortunately had a different character in the criminal records of Ireland. In Tipperary there was disturbance: life, it was said, was insecure; property defenceless; and consequently there was an enormous constabulary force. Now, the effect of the proposed remission of the constabulary rates would be, with reference to those two counties, that the county which had been most disturbed, would derive the greater advantage; whilst less, and scarcely any, benefit would be conferred upon the county, which was always in a state of peace and tranquillity. It was not just to give relief in such a way; and he was, moreover, doubtful whether this relief would improve the character and relations of the constabulary force itself. The constabulary force was admirably disciplined, and he had always supported it, on account of the benefits derived from it; but it would lose its character and much of its efficiency if it did not carry with it the good feeling of the local magistracies of the counties. Entirely dissevered from the magistracy, and paid exclusively by the Government, he was afraid it would assume too much of the character of a foreign *gens-d'armerie*. If the Government did not at present possess sufficient control with respect to the constabulary, he had no objection to give them sufficient powers; but let them not dissociate the force from the local authorities. Besides, he would impress on the attention of the Government this circumstance. If there was an increase of disturbances now in any county or district in Ireland, the police should be increased there. The farmers were alarmed at the increase of the county-rate, consequent upon the increase of disturbances; and their anxiety to diminish public rates was at present a kind of tie on them to assist, and to exert themselves in assisting, in the preservation of the peace of the county, and of the particular locality in which they lived. For these reasons he was averse to the Government proposal; for he thought that if the 190,000*l.* a year, proposed to be remitted in the manner suggested by Her Majesty's Government were appropriated in a different way—in the construction of public works and other improvements which would give employment to the people—it would be creating a new epoch of civilization and improvement in the history of Ireland, and would contribute very materially to its general and permanent improvement. If so large a sum as 190,000*l.* a year was administered justly, it would call forth funds from other parties in Ireland, locally interested in its prosperity, and it would induce public bodies to embark capital in that country. He did not suggest that any augmentation should be made in the sum proposed to be given; but if it was given so that the spade, the pickaxe, and the theodolite were put into requisition—if it was so appropriated, that the labourer and the artisan could be kept constantly and usefully employed—it would be doing much more practical good for the people of Ireland than could ever result from the remission of local burdens to any amount. He wished the course adopted by Parliament should be such as would produce a perpetual effect upon the improvement of the condition of the country. He was aware that the feeling of gratitude entertained for the mere repeal or remission of a tax—the most unpopular that could be—did not survive, in the minds of the people, even the very Session of Parliament in which that tax had been repealed. What he wished for therefore was, that Her Majesty's Government would so appropriate the sum they proposed to exempt the people of Ireland from paying in the shape of taxes that a just and useful influence should be exercised over them, and that they should, in the manner he (Lord Monteagle) suggested, be kept properly employed. He approved entirely of the principle and object of the Bill; but he wished to avail himself of that opportunity to express his opinions with reference to the measures about to be submitted to Parliament: as Her Majesty's Government was not pledged to them, his suggestions might be of some service.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON said, that though the proposition relating to Ireland, to which the noble Lord had referred, had been intimated to Parliament, yet it was not before their Lordships' House, nor was it likely to come before their Lordships' House for some time. He could assure the noble Lord, who had explained his suggestion to him last Friday, that he had taken it into consideration, and had conversed and communicated on the subject with others more likely than himself to have influence over the matter. So short a space of time, however, had passed since the no-

ble Lord mentioned the subject to him, that he could not at the present moment say that it was intended to adopt the noble Lord's suggestion. It had appeared that the proper mode of proceeding in respect to the police force in Ireland, which constituted a tax on the land, was the same as that proposed to be adopted in relation to charges on land in this country. The Commission over which his noble Friend near him (the Earl of Devon) presided, had strongly recommended the very measure now proposed—the entire relief of the Irish counties from the cost of maintaining the police force, which it was suggested should be placed entirely in the hands of the Government. The Commission to which he referred made a very strong recommendation on this subject; and he entreated their Lordships to pause before they came to any determination with reference to matters which they would hereafter be called upon to consider, when they came to take into their consideration the recommendations of that Commission. He could assure their Lordships that the Government were most anxious to give due attention to the wants of the Irish people, and that they were fully sensible of the importance of developing the great resources of that country. The Government had in contemplation measures for effecting these objects; and he hoped that, in the course of the Session, those measures which were intended to afford efficient relief to the people of Ireland would receive the sanction of Parliament. He wished that his noble Friend (Lord Monteagle) had thought proper to postpone his remarks until the measures to which he (the Duke of Wellington) had referred, came regularly before the House; because his noble Friend might rely, that whenever he gave any suggestions into his hands, they would fairly undergo the consideration of the Government. He begged to assure the noble Lord, that he had repeated to his right hon. Friend, Sir R. Peel, exactly what had been stated to him on Friday night by the noble Lord as to his views on this subject.

Lord STOURTON felt he should be wanting in his duty both to England and Ireland, if he did not express his hearty concurrence with the measure which had been proposed by the Government for the benefit and relief of the Irish people, both moral and social, by the encouragement of public works in that country. He believed it would be of great benefit to England that the labour of Ireland should be absorbed at home in the construction of public works, and in developing its resources, which, to the disgrace of this country, had lain dormant for upwards of 600 years. His Lordship next adverted to the alarming and appalling statement of the distress in Ireland which had been made by Lord Monteagle, and said that that had induced him at that early period to address the House. Many of their Lordships might recollect the condition of that country in 1817, when it appeared from official returns that 65,000 persons passed through the fever hospitals of Dublin. He feared that they were now about to witness a similar state of things; and it behoved their Lordships to adopt all possible means of averting such a calamity. He trusted that the measures proposed would be the advent of a new and better era in the history of England and Ireland. He was induced to believe that the measure now proposed by the Government, if followed up, would tend more to cement the union between this country and Ireland than any which had been proposed. It would, in fact, unite them, almost in spite of themselves. It would bring the poverty of Ireland to compete with the wealth of England, and to form an equilibrium between the labour of the two countries—an equilibrium which he wished to see established, but upon a sound basis. He wished on this account to see the Irish peasant elevated into a better position than the agricultural labourers in many districts of England, and than the hand-loom weavers in the manufacturing towns. Under any circumstances it would be gratifying to him if the employment of the Irish people were less dependent upon the land. In 1825, Mr. Leslie Foster told them the Irish must have land, for they depended upon it. That word 'must' had dreadful power; and therefore he contended that generosity, justice, gratitude, policy, and interest, all combined to show the necessity of giving as much employment as possible, and in such a mode as was contemplated in the present Bill, to the people of Ireland.

The Earl of DEVON entirely concurred in the opinion expressed by his noble Friend (Lord Stourton) as to the importance of finding employment for the people of Ireland, and of employing them in the prosecution of works attended with the advantage of improving the country. There would be no difference of opinion, he apprehended, upon the Bill now before the House, considering its object, nor any doubt that it would be read the second time; but he did

not rise so much for the purpose of directly speaking to the Bill, as for the purpose of referring to what the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington) had stated in relation to the opinions expressed by the Tenure of Land Commissioners. These opinions were given by four persons—to put himself out of the question—eminently qualified to form a sound judgment upon the subject; and it was founded not upon any theories or fancies of their own, but upon the due consideration of a great mass of evidence taken upon this particular point. He would, without going further into this subject, at once say that if the recommendations of that Commission were carried out, they would to a great extent remove one grievance to which the noble Lord had referred—the existing inequalities of the local taxation. The Commissioners stated, that they considered the police force had become in a great measure a Government force. In many parts of Ireland it was employed instead of the military, which it would have been necessary to have employed in large numbers if the constabulary force had not existed. The appointments rested with the Government. In this respect, therefore, it had more the character of a national than a local establishment. What the Commissioners, under these circumstances, recommended was, that the expense of maintaining the quota of constabulary required it to be raised by the different counties, under the Act of Parliament, should be discontinued, and the expense be wholly defrayed by the State, instead of paying it only partially. The Commissioners also referred to the power possessed by the Lord Lieutenant of sending an additional force into any counties or districts where disturbances might occur; and they recommended that the whole expense of such additional force should be borne by the county or townland in which the conduct of the people rendered the presence of an extra force necessary; and he repeated, that if the suggestions and recommendations of the Commissioners were acted upon, the taxation now complained of would be equalized. He was fully alive to the necessity of being liberal in the grants of public money which must be required, not only for public works properly so called, of which he admitted the importance, but also in aid of works which he considered of greater importance—those which tended to promote the actual agricultural improvement of the country—which, if carried out, as he hoped they would be, to a considerable extent in the coming year, would not only provide employment for the people, by relieving existing distress, but would lay the foundation of an increased amount of produce from the fertile soil of Ireland, which, in his opinion, would be the best safeguard against the recurrence of such a calamity as was now impending over that country.

The Earl of RODEN had listened to this debate with much interest, and, as an Irish resident landlord, he felt grateful to Her Majesty's Government for the proposition before the House: he trusted and believed it would be of very material use in the present condition of the people of Ireland; but, at the same time, there were clauses in the Bill with which he could not altogether agree—he meant the compulsory and mandatory clauses, to which, when the Bill was in Committee, he would take the opportunity of calling their Lordships' attention. He had listened with sincere gratification to the speech of his noble Friend (Lord Monteagle); but he was extremely sorry to hear the gloomy view which he took of what was to be expected in Ireland with regard to the apprehended famine. What the noble Lord had stated with regard to his own district in Ireland, was certainly correct; but in the north of Ireland, where he (the Earl of Roden) lived, the House would be happy to hear, though there might individually be great difficulty and pressure, distress did not exist to the extent described by his noble Friend. He trusted, nevertheless, that Government would take the necessary steps to meet the tremendous circumstances to which his noble Friend had referred, for he believed that in many parts the distress had by no means been exaggerated. He had heard for the first time, to-night, the views of his noble Friend respecting the constabulary force in Ireland. He (the Earl of Roden) had a very peculiar feeling with regard to the constabulary, as at present constituted. In no country could there exist a more useful and active establishment than that of the Irish police; they were worthy of all praise; they did their duty, and their management reflected credit upon those who were placed at their head. But he must say, that the resident magistrates of Ireland, who attended the petty sessions, and who, therefore, were aware of the actual circumstances of the country, felt themselves put aside very often by the Government in the exercise of their control over this force. Anything that tend-

ed to give the control more strongly into the hands of Government must be objectionable to those resident magistrates. It had always been an important object in Ireland to induce the gentry to reside in the country, and to take part in the different county and local subjects; but of late years he thought they had been put aside in a great degree; the Government—he did not speak of one Government more than another—very often acted without consultation with the magistracy, seeming to consider the police force as a sort of *gens d'armerie*, which ought to act without any concert with the local authorities. This proceeding had produced a very bad effect; and had led many gentlemen of rank and property, who were in the commission of the peace, to decline acting as magistrates. In the part of the country with which he was connected, there was great difficulty in getting magistrates to act, and, consequently, a stipendiary magistrate had been appointed. As a resident landlord, he must say he felt this state of things very much. He did not wish to give any opinion to-night upon the proposition of his noble Friend; but when it was proposed to take the constabulary expense from the counties, to be paid by Government, and that this was considered a boon, he thought the effect of it upon the local magistracy well worth serious consideration.

The Marquess of LANSDOWNE said, there could be no question of the good policy of removing the expense of supporting the constabulary force in the present state of Ireland; and, therefore, he had entire confidence in that part of the Bill. It was in the nature of a substitute, throwing upon the Government the burden that had hitherto been borne by the Irish counties. He was aware, as the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington) had stated, and as the noble Earl (the Earl of Devon) had also stated, that the suggestion originally proceeded from the Land Commissioners; but it came from them in a totally different view from that now proposed by her Majesty's Government. It came from them in the nature of a proposed change in the principle of the constabulary force, and not with the intention of throwing the charge upon Government. The Commissioners proposed to confine the relief precisely to the original amount of the constabulary charge imposed upon each county; but in the plan now brought forward this view was put out of the question; it was brought forward as forming a part of that measure of justice which, both in England and in Ireland, it was wished to extend to the occupiers of land in consequence of the great and important measures to be submitted to Parliament. In their endeavours to accomplish this efficiently, the Government had lost sight of that equality of taxation which the Commissioners recommended; and the objections of his noble Friend (Lord Monteagle) implied, that the relief would be far greater in the disturbed districts than in those counties where perfect tranquillity prevailed. Without wishing to pronounce a hasty opinion upon this matter, or to do more than urge upon Her Majesty's Government to take into consideration the future benefits which Ireland would derive from being relieved from a portion of local taxation, he would infinitely prefer the proposition thrown out by his noble Friend; if the annual expenditure on public works were guaranteed, then the measures adverted to might be adopted, and the country relieved from the expense of supporting the constabulary. He approved of this upon general principles, having always observed that public works had been more beneficial than any other class of measures; and they had this particular advantage, of being always before the minds of the people, constantly reminding the whole population of the services and benefits rendered to them by the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Lord COTTENHAM said, it was essential to the success of the measure before the House that it should be founded on justice, and not diminish the security which parties held for advances of money. He alluded to those who had advanced funds in furtherance of private improvement. In the course of last year various schemes had been suggested, for the purpose of giving facilities for obtaining money to be advanced for improvements in land, affording at the same time ample security to those who had interests in remainder. He could see cases in which great injustice would be done under the Bill as it now stood. He would suppose the case of an Irish estate mortgaged—it might be to the amount of its whole value. The proprietor might get an advance of money under the provisions of this Act, and the person who had advanced the former mortgage would then find himself ousted by the State coming in as a first mortgagee. He would suppose another case; namely, one arising from the provision affecting estates that were settled. The holder of an estate

might be only a tenant for life, and the next person in remainder might have a much larger interest in the estate. The tenant for life would get a grant of money under this Bill, to be expended at his own discretion. He might, perhaps, be an experimental agriculturist, and might fail in effecting the improvements which he would attempt. In such a case, even though having a very limited interest in the estate, he would, under the Bill as it now stood, have the exclusive power of charging the estate, without being obliged to hold any communication with the remainder-man. He would beg, on this subject, to call the attention of the noble Earl by whom the Bill had been introduced, to the Act passed last Session, some of the provisions of which could be adopted in the present Act without deviating from the general principles laid down.

The EARL of MOUNTCASHEL wished to be permitted to state, as a resident landed proprietor in the south of Ireland, and as a Poor Law guardian, that the noble Lord opposite (Lord Monteagle) had not exaggerated the distress existing in that part of the country. He could state of his own knowledge that want and misery were staring the inhabitants of the district to which he alluded in the face. Although there was great anxiety shown by Parliament to facilitate the Irish Railway Bills, still he much feared that these works could not be brought forward in sufficient time to give employment to the starving population in the approaching season of scarcity. Even at present potatoes were selling in his own neighbourhood at the prices which they usually brought in June and July, the dearest months in the year; and in the course of another month he feared there would be no potatoes to be had at any price. He also dreaded that disturbances would break out in the country. He resided in a part of the country that was usually quiet and tranquil; but within the last fortnight or ten days appearances of disturbance had shown themselves even there. Large bodies of armed men had been seen traversing the country at mid-day, and some murders had been committed. He had been lately speaking on the subject to some of his oldest and most respectable tenants, and their usual declaration was, that before two months passed away there would be a civil war in the country. He trusted that these apprehensions would prove ill-grounded; but if the people should fail in procuring food and employment, they would undoubtedly be driven to desperation and violence. He trusted, therefore, that every facility would be given for the employment of the people, and that, too, without loss of time. He wished to take that opportunity of alluding to another subject. He had received several letters from millowners in the north of Ireland, expressing the greatest apprehension at the effect which the Drainage Bill introduced by Her Majesty's Government would have on their interests. He trusted the Government would adopt precautions to prevent the interests of the millowners being sacrificed without proper compensation being afforded to them.

The EARL of ST. GERMANS begged to explain that no new principle of law was involved in the present Bill.

LORD CAMPBELL said, that in consequence of the influx of English capital in Irish mortgages, the rate of interest payable on mortgages in that country had been reduced, within two years, from 6 per cent. to 4 per cent. This had taken place under the impression amongst English capitalists that they had full security for their money; but after the passing of the present Bill he feared that mortgages on Irish estates would be soon at a discount, because they would then rest on no security at all. He did not wonder at what had fallen from the noble Earl (Mountcashel) on the alarm existing on the subject of the Drainage Bill in Ireland. Their Lordships were perhaps not aware that that Act would give power of creating corporations indefinitely all over Ireland. There might be a thousand corporations, having unlimited power over this sort of occupiers, called into existence by that Act, and their Lordships might perhaps act very properly in exercising a little caution before they allowed it to pass.

Bill read 2ª.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, February 9, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW WRIT. For Nottingham County (Southern Division), *v.* the Earl of Lincoln, Chief Secretary for Ireland.

NEW MEMBERS SWORN. For York County (West Riding), Viscount Morpeth.—For Cork, Alexander M'Carthy, Esq.

PUBLIC BILLS.—1° County Works Presentments (Ireland).

2° Citations (Scotland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Birmingham, for Repeal of Duty on Copper.—From London, against proposed Alteration in the Paper Duty.—From Kelso, Jedburgh,

and Melrose, against the system of Licensing Toll Houses for the Sale of Spirituous Liquors.—From Lothersdale, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From Cupar, (2 Petitions) for the Abolition of the Exclusive Privileges of the Incorporated Trades (Scotland).—From Cupar, and Annual Committee of the Royal Burghs of Scotland, for Alteration of Laws relating to Assessments of Prisons (Scotland).—From Leicester, and an immense number of other places, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.—From Buxhall, and an immense number of other places, against Alteration of the Corn Laws.—From Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and other places, in favour of, and from the Hundred of South Greenhoe, and several other places, against the proposed measure relating to Customs and Corn Importation.

AYRSHIRE AND GALLOWAY RAILWAY.

SIR JOHN YARDE BULLER brought up the Report on the Petition for the Ayrshire and Galloway Railway Bill. On the question that it do lie on the Table,

MR. HODGSON HINDE begged to be permitted, before the Report was received, to ask a question of the Attorney General, on a point of law which had been raised and decided by the Committee. He did not wish to impugn the decision of the Committee; but he thought it necessary, in a case which involved so serious a point of law as regarded Scotch Bills, to have the opinion of the Attorney General. Parties in Scotland came before that House to ask for its consent to a contract drawn up between themselves in a manner which they considered perfectly valid. He wished to direct special attention to the case of the Ayrshire and Galloway Railway. The 40th Standing Order of the House provided that parties who appeared as trustees to Railway Bills should bind themselves, their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, duly to the performance of the contract, and that if the parties did not so bind themselves and their heirs, &c., they should not be admitted as having complied with the Standing Orders. Now the objection taken to the contract, in the case before them, was, that the parties who were the trustees named in it were also shareholders, and therefore not bound as the Standing Orders required, and the Committee came to the following Resolution in consequence:—

"Resolved—That the Standing Orders in this case have not been complied with, inasmuch as subscription to the contract deed is not valid."

Now, the practice having been strictly in accordance with the usual practice in Scotland, the parties took the best opinions which they could obtain upon the law of the case, and they appealed to the best authority in that House upon it. And he, without fear, appealed to those Gentlemen who were conversant with the law, both of Scotland and England, whether the fact of trustees having signed the contract deed as shareholders invalidated the contract so far as to prevent remedy at law.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL thought it of course his duty, appealed to as he had been, to state what opinion he had formed with regard to the point submitted to him. Under the Standing Order mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, it was required that the parties subscribing to the deed as trustees should bind themselves, their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns. The effects were understood to be, that the subscription deed so signed was then a deed to which the shareholders were the parties of the first part, and the parties of the second part were the two trustees. In the case submitted by the hon. Gentleman, the decision was that one of the trustees named in the deed being also a shareholder—[An hon. MEMBER: Both the trustees being shareholders]—that, consequently, the shareholders had covenated separately and jointly to the amount of the subscription with trustees who were at the same time covenanters and covenantees to a contract made by themselves and with themselves, and that the deed was therefore invalid. Since the Committee had arrived at that decision they had, he believed, modified it in this manner—that the deed was invalid so far as affected the trustees alone. Now, it appeared to him (the Attorney General) that the Committee, with every respect for them, had entirely mistaken the case. The question was, whether the subscription contract deed was or was not in compliance with the Standing Orders, which required that the parties to it should bind themselves, their heirs, executors, administrators, &c., to the performance of the contract. Now, that was done by the trustees as well as the shareholders. It was certain that in a court of law there would be difficulty of proceeding, because a party could not sue himself. But in a Court of Equity, where the objection would not prevail, the parties would be compelled to fulfil their contract. But in this case the House should recollect that it was a Scotch case, and that in Scotland no such difference existed as in this country between Courts of Law and Equity, and it would not so much signify whether the party were liable in law or in equity only. His opinion therefore was, that the contract deed was in strict compliance with the Standing Orders. That even in England it would be good, but in

a case under the law of Scotland, there could be no objection.

SIR JOHN Y. BULLER, as the chairman of the Committee whose decision was impugned, begged leave to offer a few observations upon the subject, although he confessed it would not become him, after the opinion given by the Attorney General, to venture to contest his view of the law of the case. It had now been laid down decidedly as a point of law; but the decision of the Committee of which he was chairman was given in accordance with decisions of the last Session, and no Bill under similar circumstances would, under those decisions, have been allowed to proceed. But were any lawyer except the Attorney General asked whether the remedy in a Court of Equity, to which the learned Attorney General had alluded, would not be worse than the disease, what did the House think would be his answer? However, he had no objection to allow the question to be referred to the Standing Orders' Committee. Let that Committee take the whole question into consideration; and if they thought that all subscription contracts so signed as those under consideration were valid, let them so decide it, and let the decision be received as final. But even in case such were the decision, he hoped that Gentlemen would not put themselves in the anomalous position of being trustees and shareholders under the same contract.

MR. RUTHERFURD agreed with the Attorney General, that the decision of the Committee was erroneous.

MR. GREENE suggested that, instead of sending the case before the Standing Orders' Committee, the Report should be referred back to the Committee which had sent it up. He moved that it be recommitted.

MR. STRUTT differed from the Attorney General; but, admitting the correctness of that hon. and learned Gentleman's view of the law, he thought that there should be some provision against the extreme difficulty of the parties obtaining relief only in the Court of Chancery. He had some doubts, even, if the Standing Order had not been expressly framed with a view of providing against the chance of appeals to Equity, and of compelling such a state of things as would substitute the shorter relief to be had in a Court of Law.

Amendment agreed to. Report recommitted.

THE CASE OF THE ECLAIR.

DR. BOWRING asked whether any and what measures had been taken by Her Majesty's Government to inquire into the causes of the disease said to have broken out at Boa Vista, in consequence of communication with the Eclair?

SIR G. CLERK, in reply, stated, that the attention of Her Majesty's Government had been directed to this subject, and inquiries had been instituted as to the nature and extent of the fever reported to prevail at Boa Vista after the visit of the Eclair. Dr. M'William had proceeded to the spot with the view of taking such precautions as might be thought necessary to prevent any extension of the evil, and to ascertain whether any additional assistance was required. If the fever continued to prevail, of course such other steps would be taken as were requisite to check the evil.

COLONIAL ACCOUNTS.

DR. BOWRING asked what steps, if any, the Government had taken to give effect to the recommendations of the Committee on colonial accounts, those recommendations having obtained the sanction of the House?

MR. CARDWELL would shortly state what had been done in this matter. After the Resolutions to which the hon. Member referred were passed, instructions were given to the Commissioners of Audits to revise the whole of the regulations under which the sums dispersed over the Colonies were paid. The revisal immediately commenced. He believed it was now nearly completed; and when the regulations had been so revised by the Commissioners of Audits, they would be circulated in all the Colonies, accompanied with instructions that they should be immediately carried out.

FACTORY SCHOOLS.

MR. BRIGHT wished to put a question to the right hon. Home Secretary, founded upon the report of the factory inspectors, and regarding the distribution of the money to factory schools arising from fines under the Factory Act. It appeared that Mr. Horner had given 150*l.* to schools connected with the Established Church, and only 50*l.* to the British and Foreign Society's and Dissenters' schools. Mr. Saunders, another inspector, had given 270*l.* to Church of England schools, and 35*l.* to Dissenting schools. His question was, whether it were not the intention of the Act

that the money should be distributed freely, fairly, and equally, among the various schools where factory children were educated? The distribution to which he had referred did not seem in the spirit of the Act; but upon that point he was anxious to obtain the opinion of the right hon. Baronet.

Sir J. GRAHAM replied, that it was no doubt the intention of the Act that the money should be distributed equally and without favour. His instructions to the factory inspectors had been direct and positive, that the spirit of the Act should be carried into execution, and that sums should be apportioned with reference to the wants of the schools and to nothing else. In justice to Mr. Horner, he must add that he believed he was himself a Member of the British and Foreign School Society, so that Mr. Horner's prejudices, if any, would be in their favour. He believed Mr. Horner had acted with great impartiality; and he (Sir James Graham) would read to the House the statement he had himself made on this very matter. He said—

"It may appear from this list that in my recommendations I give a preference to National schools. This is not the case. I have been surprised that I have not had applications for aid from other public day schools. The above recommendations in favour of the British and Moravian schools were voluntary offers on my part, and I have recently recommended grants to three British schools. I made inquiry about a Roman Catholic school, to ascertain if it needed assistance, but I learned that it was not attended by one factory child."

He could assure the hon. Member he would find that any application, come from whatever quarter it might, would receive the fullest attention. Other schools had made no application for assistance; but from whatever quarter they came, it had been his (Sir James Graham's) desire that the spirit of the Act should be carried into execution.

Sir R. INGLIS meant no want of courtesy to the right hon. Baronet when he requested him to state more fully whether the House was to understand that he wished that equal or proportionate sums should be given to schools? He (Sir R. Inglis) had gathered that the right hon. Baronet had desired that equal sums should be given; but he could not help thinking that the meaning of the Act was that proportionate sums should be given. The same amount ought not to be granted to a school of fifty as to a school of a hundred children, whether they were of the Church of England foundation, or of the British and Foreign Society.

Sir J. GRAHAM added, that the Act gave ample discretion to the Secretary of State to act upon the reports of the factory inspectors. He did not think that the number of children in a school ought to form the rule, but the wants of the school. The inspectors would be guided by the merits of the schools, and would report on their wants, and the sum granted in each particular case would be with reference to the wants of each school.

Subject at an end.

FLAW IN THE CORN LAWS.

Mr. COLLETT had seen a statement put forth in the public prints, to which he wished to call the attention of the right hon. Gentleman. The statement was headed "Singular Flaw in the operation of the Corn Laws," and was as follows:—

"A singular flaw in the operation of the Corn Laws has recently come to light. The old Act of 9 George IV., cap. 60, was repealed by the new sliding-scale of Sir Robert Peel, which came into operation on the 29th of April, 1842. By a strange blunder, three days elapsed between the expiration of the old and the operation of the new Act, which did not escape the lynx-eyed scrutiny of certain parties in this town, who are sometimes facetiously styled 'rogues in grain.' They took large quantities of grain out of bond on the plea that no duty could be levied during the three days' interregnum. But the Customs' authorities would not listen to such a free-and-easy reading of the Act, and the duty was accordingly paid under protest. The amount of duty so paid was upwards of 80,000*l*. The affair was referred to the Crown lawyers, and, as the law's delay is proverbial, the decision has only been come to this week. The corn merchants have triumphed. The decision of the Crown lawyers showed that they were right. The whole of the duties have been returned to the parties, of which one house, Messrs. Saunders and Claxton, are the recipients, it is said, of 20,000*l*. by this lucky move. The suspension of the Corn Laws, even for three days, has thus proved, it would seem, a 'golden harvest' for the 'knowing ones.' But this juggling is only part and parcel of the sliding-scale system from beginning to end."

The question he wished to ask the right hon. Gentleman was, whether this statement was true, and whether the public had suffered by it? But if it would be more convenient than now, he would put the question to-morrow.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER said, as the hon. Member had not previously called his attention to the question, he was not able to give farther information than was contained in the paragraph in the newspapers; but he should be ready to give the information asked on a future day.

JUVENILE OFFENDERS.

Mr. LIDDELL had a question to ask, and would in the first place remind the House that the noble Lord the late Member for Dorset had put a Notice on the book to call attention to the state of the juvenile population of London, Westminster, and Southwark. As that noble Lord had relinquished his important duties for a time (and for a time only he hoped), perhaps he (Mr. Liddell) might be permitted to read a few sentences delivered by a learned Judge to show how necessary it was to do something in the matter. ["Question!" "Order!"] He did not intend to exceed the limit usually granted in putting a question, and would merely explain his object, having already brought it under the notice of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Home Department. He would ask whether Government, after having read these remarks, were prepared to take any step towards the improvement and reformation of the juvenile population of the metropolis?

Sir J. GRAHAM said, that the subject to which the hon. Gentleman had referred had not been neglected either by the present or by the late Government. Until the year 1838, there had been no institution in this country for the punishment of juvenile offenders, except the hulks in the Medway, on board of which there had been 320 boys. Experience, however, had proved that that discipline, so far from reforming the culprits, had been highly injurious to their morals; and the noble Lord the Member for the city of London (Lord J. Russell), had, in the year 1838, with the sanction of the House, founded the institution at Parkhurst, which had produced the most favourable results. When he had succeeded to the Home Office, in the year 1841, there were only about 280 juvenile offenders at Parkhurst. There were now 660 juvenile offenders there, who were subject to a discipline of a reforming character, and as good, he believed, as it was possible to devise. There were, in addition, 200 juvenile convicts in Millbank; so that at the present moment there were nearly 900 juvenile delinquents subject to a reforming discipline. If it should be the pleasure of the House to sanction the proposal of the Government, and to throw upon the public the charge of carrying into execution the sentences on offenders convicted by juries, he would endeavour to induce the magistrates in the various counties of England, to appropriate portions of prisons and of houses of correction for the special punishment of juvenile offenders; and it certainly was his confident hope, that when that improved discipline was established in each county for prisoners of tender years, public munificence and benevolence would also, in each county, establish asylums of refuge, in which, on their dismissal from prison, orphan and destitute children, on whom that discipline would have produced a favourable effect, would be received, and from which they might afterwards be restored to society.

REMISSION OF DUTIES ON CORN.

Sir R. PEEL: I am anxious to take the first opportunity of referring to a question which was put to me the other night by the noble Lord the Member for the city of London. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), following his Colleague (Mr. Pattison), asked me whether it was the intention of the Government to remit the duties on foreign corn immediately after the Resolution of this House should be reported? That question, Sir, was put to me at once by the noble Lord without previous notice; and, under the impression that the Treasury had dealt with the duties on corn in the same way as other duties, I answered the noble Lord, that the Treasury would remit the duties on foreign corn on the report of the Resolution in this House. I gave that answer under the impression, as I have said, that the Treasury had dealt with the duties on corn as with other duties. I find that impression is erroneous. In every case when the corn duties have been dealt with by Parliament, the reduction of duty has taken place from the passing of the Act; and the Treasury has never in any case, on the report of the Resolution, undertaken to remit the duties. I should be exceedingly unwilling to assume, on the part of the Treasury, any authority for which there was not a precedent. I should be also exceedingly sorry to assume it in this case, because I fear that the assumption of that authority, for the first time, would have a tendency rather to prejudice than promote a satisfactory settlement of this question. It is the intention of the Government, therefore, to adhere to the course which has been uniformly pursued in all former periods of alteration in the Corn Laws, and make the reduction of duty, if the measure should meet with the sanction of Parliament, take effect from the passing of the Act. I believe there will be no inconvenience or delay as to the taking of corn out of bond at the duty of 4*s*. dependent on the passing of

the Act; but, at the same time, it is of so much importance that the decision of Parliament on this subject should be known as soon as possible, and that the trade should have an assurance as to the principle which is to govern our conduct, that Her Majesty's Government propose to give preference to the Corn Bill over all other matters. We will propose no other Government business until the decision of this branch of the Legislature with respect to the new Corn Law shall have been taken. That Bill will, therefore, be proceeded with before any other measure connected with the Tariff; and, provided it meet with the sanction of this House, will be sent at once to the House of Lords.

Mr. G. PALMER wished to know whether the right hon. Baronet intended that the House should go on with the Corn Bill from day to day, or whether there should be any interval?

Sir R. PEEL: Of course, there will be an interval between the first and second reading of the Bill; but I do not preclude myself from going on with the consideration of the other portions of the Tariff during that interval. What I mean to say is, that as far as the Government business is concerned, the Corn Bill shall occupy the attention of the House in the first instance until finally disposed of.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS.

Order for Committee read. On the Motion that the Speaker do now leave the Chair,

Mr. P. MILES said: Sir, I rise to move the Amendment of which I have given notice—

"That this House will, upon this day six months, resolve itself into the said Committee."

Not that I wish, Sir, to inflict upon you the tediousness of listening to a long debate, but because I consider this the most fitting time for taking the discussion on this question. I trust I shall approach the consideration of it calmly and dispassionately; and that no expressions of mine may tend to excite any angry feelings during the debate. This question is of too important a character—of too comprehensive details—to be treated on mere party grounds. It is a question in which every man in this country is interested, from the highest to the lowest—the merchant equally with the manufacturer, the landlord with the tenant, the operative with the artisan. I trust that each one of them will give it his deepest consideration. I consider this question to be of far greater magnitude than the Reform Bill, because it involves a change of that policy which has been the ruling principle of this country from the earliest period of its history—under which it has attained to great eminence, and enjoyed a high degree of prosperity—a policy which all nations have long followed, and which all still continue to follow. Whether the country be prepared for this great change—whether the constituencies are ready to grant their approval—remains yet to be proved. But I cannot hesitate to say that, on a question involving such vital interests, the country ought at least to be consulted. For undoubtedly the majority of the Members of the present House of Commons were elected on protection principles. Notwithstanding the explanations given by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government at the commencement of the Session, I cannot but agree in the expression which fell from the late noble Secretary for the Colonies, which I believe also expresses the opinions entertained by a majority of the right hon. Baronet's Colleagues — that there was no peculiar necessity for this measure—and that though undoubtedly there has occurred a failure in the potato crop in Ireland (a calamity which no one deplores more sincerely than I do), yet that there was no real ground for apprehending a famine in that country, for every report states that the barley and oat crops were large. From a Return lately presented to Parliament, I find, that between July 5, 1845, and Jan. 5, 1846, nearly a million of quarters of grain has been exported from that country, and more than a million of cwts. of meal. This does not look like a famine: that there was no apprehension of famine in this country, is, I think, proved by the fact, that at the time when the right hon. Baronet desired to open the ports, the price of wheat was only 56*s.* 2*d.* per quarter—the price which the right hon. Baronet considered in 1842 a fair price, and not over remunerative to the farmer. I trust that the House will not consider that I undervalue the responsibility of the Minister, or that I wish to taunt the right hon. Gentleman with being alarmed without a cause. I can well understand the anxiety attendant on the high office of Prime Minister; I can well imagine how such anxiety must be enhanced by the bare idea of famine, and

how he might be apt to neglect other duties to give to this engrossing subject his undistracted attention. I can well understand also the eagerness of a Lord Lieutenant, desirous not only of giving the first information on the subject of an expected scarcity, but of continuing his reports of all the intelligence he might be able to collect from different quarters, and from different parties. I admit that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government did read some alarming paragraphs on the first night of the Session, and which, I dare say, made a great impression upon him; but I think that when he was considering this question, he ought likewise to have considered the state of the markets in this country; for I believe there are no parties who watch the progress of the nation so closely, and who weigh so well the probable prospect of abundance or scarcity, as the leading corn merchants. And I say, that if all their reports had agreed in representing a great scarcity—if all parties had been unanimous on the subject—it is but expressing an opinion in which the farmers of England would all join, when I say, "Open the ports—admit all the produce you can—avert the horrors of famine, whatever may be the consequence!" But that there was no danger of famine at that time, I think there is ample evidence in the price of wheat. And when I consider that the Colleagues of the right hon. Baronet, who had equal means of judging of the probable chances of abundance and scarcity, declared the reports to have been exaggerated, and declined to open the ports—I cannot help thinking (without wishing to impute improper motives to the right hon. Baronet) that the cause of protection had been long doomed in his mind, and that the failure of the potato crop was but the extra impulse that sealed its fate. We are asked to look at the measure of the right hon. Baronet as a whole, and not in isolated parts; and it is, Sir, as a whole that I am prepared to give it my decided opposition. But when I say that, I do not mean to deny that there are some parts of it from which I think the country might derive a benefit. I bring this question forward, because I think that a moderate protection is due to native industry. I say "moderate protection;" for I have never advocated more than what was fair and just. I bring it forward, not on account of the agricultural interest only, but on account of all the interests of this country. I cannot myself be said to belong to any particular interest; I am equally engaged in them all. I know the difficulty I encounter in bringing this question forward, and enforcing opinions which the right hon. Baronet has given up as unsound and "untenable," after maintaining them for thirty years. I remember well the ability he displayed in maintaining those arguments; and I can easily foresee the talent with which he will now controvert them. But I am not deterred from advocating this cause; and I am induced to encounter these difficulties, because I know that a large minority in this House, and a large and influential party—perhaps not a minority—out of this House, hold opinions on this question in accordance with my own; and I believe, that if I had asked, even less than three short months ago, when these measures were first proposed in the Cabinet—if I had asked many of the Members whom I now see sitting on this side, behind the Treasury benches, whether they were prepared to abandon all protective duties, and to vote for a repeal of the Corn Laws, and for free-trade measures, that scarcely an affirmative answer would have been returned. I feel, sure, Sir, that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton must have been astonished at his miraculous accession of adherents. May I presume to ask those hon. and right hon. Gentlemen, whether they were meditating in the quiet of country life on the results of these last three years? Were they watching the progress of Ministerial convictions towards free trade — anticipating the final realisation of those opinions, and preparing to substitute them for their own? What the opinions were upon which these hon. and right hon. Gentlemen were elected, I know not—that is no affair of mine; I leave them to settle it with their constituents. I must say, for myself, however, that if my opinions had undergone such a change, I should have felt bound to follow the example of the noble Lord (Ashley) the late Member for Dorsetshire. My objection to these measures is, that I can see no termination to them; every succeeding Session brings greater changes. And I know, that if impartial justice is meted out to all, larger and greater changes yet must follow. I think I may venture further to say, that if these changes take place, the confidence of the country must eventually be shaken, as undoubtedly will be its confidence in public men. But the more I consider this question, the more I am con-

vinced that it ought not to be allowed to pass this Parliament, before the deliberate opinion of the country has been pronounced upon it. Sir, I cannot agree in the opinion expressed by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, that the prosperity we have enjoyed recently has been mainly produced by his measures. First, we must look to the state of affairs left by the noble Lord opposite, and the circumstances of the country at the accession to office of the right hon. Baronet. Great confidence was then reposed in the right hon. Gentleman. He had a strong majority in Parliament. The trade of the country was in a critical state—I may say, in the greatest depression; and I believe I may also say, these evil consequences were mainly to be attributed to the bad harvests and the excessive overtrading of the previous three years. It was at this very period, when the right hon. Baronet entered office, that the great experiment of railroads had been tested, and had been found to answer: we have, since seen how far speculation in that direction has gone. Could any one foresee the immense extent to which railroads have been carried, and the enormous amount of employment they have given to the labour of the country? The effect, I know, has been, that in many counties so great has been the demand for labourers, that scarcely a labourer has been obtainable. We must also take into consideration the immense impulse given to the iron trade, the price of iron having more than doubled within the last two or three years. And if I may judge from the number of applications recently made to Parliament for new Bills during the present Session, I do not think it likely that there will be any cessation in the progress of the construction of railways for some time to come. We cannot overlook the immense extent to which all this has augmented the coal trade of the country. The wages of the labourers have in many instances trebled. And when I consider all these facts —when I remember that periodical fluctuations of trade have always taken place, and that the right hon. Baronet entered office at the lowest period, and that there has since occurred the immense increase of consumption consequent on all this increased activity in the iron and coal trades; when I recollect that all this must have been, to a great extent, independent of the right hon. Baronet's measures; when I remember further, that the termination of the war in India has led to increased commercial activity, and has given a great impetus to every department of trade; and when I couple all this with successive good harvests, I can hardly believe that all this prosperity has been brought about by the measures of the right hon. Gentleman; for I believe that many of these circumstances would doubtless have taken place if the noble Lord opposite had remained in power. Neither, Sir, do I believe that our commercial exports are to be taken as the true test of our prosperity. We have lately seen to what extent foreign markets have been glutted, and the length of time required to get rid of that glut. Within the last few years, we have seen India and China inundated with our cotton goods, where they could be purchased cheaper than they could be bought in Manchester. For my own part I place much more reliance on our home market; and when this is coupled with our manufacturers working to "order" for foreigners, I think that it is a much surer test of our prosperity than if I were to see our exports continually increasing. In considering the details of this measure, the article of most importance is Corn. It is not my intention to quote speeches which the right hon. Baronet has previously made, or charge him with inconsistency. I know it would be useless. He has told us he has abandoned his principles, and consented to change the measures which he himself passed in 1842. If he consider that this is essential to the best interests of the country, I do not blame him. But I cannot consent to follow him, or to change my opinions so easily. The measure of 1842 has been admitted by all parties to have worked well so far, as a Corn Law. It has conduced to great steadiness of price, and it has answered the right hon. Baronet's expectations. Under that law, he aimed at a price of 56*s.* as a "fair price" for the farmer. I should like to ask him what price he considers a "fair price" for the farmer now? I should be glad to know at what price he aims under the proposed law? Does he consider that his measure promises such great advantages to the farmer as to form an adequate "compensation" for the loss of 10*s.* or 15*s.* per quarter upon the price of corn, the "fall" expected by the Gentlemen opposite? But the right hon. Baronet has, indeed, told us that he does not believe the price of corn will be lowered by the projected measure. Then why does he repeal the existing law? And if he is

right in his opinion, what becomes of all the arguments about "cheap bread," which we have heard so much about from hon. Members opposite? The right hon. Baronet tells us one story, and hon. Members opposite another. I say, then, Sir, are we not justified in hesitating to vote for these measures, and in appealing to the opinions of the country? For we feel that there is no necessity for any such change. I believe there is a great difference between the cheapness which is the result of a good harvest, and the cheapness which is produced by the importation of grain from abroad. I am afraid that the right hon. Baronet has been misled in his calculations, and has over-estimated the results of his own policy, through the bountiful harvests we have been recently blessed with. A great authority on this subject—Mr. Huskisson—said, some time since no doubt, but not the less truly, I think, on that account, that—

"cheapness produced by the importation of corn from abroad, is a sure forerunner of scarcity; but that steady home supply is the only sure foundation for steady moderate prices."

I agree in that opinion. I think it most important that no check should be given in this country to the cultivation of corn. I consider no state so critical for this country to be placed in as to be dependent on foreign countries for the supply of its food. What may be the result of these measures, no man can foretell. My own conviction is, that they will lead to greater fluctuations in price than have ever been known; and that before long we shall have the right hon. Baronet proposing some measure to the House to regulate the trade in corn. I believe they will induce the great capitalists of Europe improperly to speculate in corn, and that it will be of far greater advantage to the foreigner than to our own country. I do not pretend to say it will lead to the utter ruin of the agricultural interests. But I think that it will assuredly cause severe agricultural distress, and that it will inevitably tend to lower the wages of this country, and that the working classes will certainly feel its effects before the higher orders. If these measures pass, we may henceforth consider free trade to be the ruling principle of Her Majesty's Government, and that sooner or later every interest must bow before it. When you have removed protection from agriculture, I cannot see with what justice you can retain it for any other interest. The shipping interests, with all others, must follow; and what becomes of our navigation laws and reciprocity treaties? Where the sweeping torrent is to stop, when the barriers are once broken, I cannot say. But I feel convinced that if justice is to be done to all, no protection can continue. If the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) comes into office, he must outbid the right hon. Baronet; and if he do not, I should like to hear what he would propose. Then, may I ask the League also, what they will do? Will they dissolve and retire into private life? Even if the leaders were so disposed, may we not apprehend that others will rise up and agitate some other questions? I think that when such opinions are once broached, you will find others go far beyond them; and that you will find that the right hon. Baronet has only fanned the flame of agitation without extinguishing it. We are to have, it would seem, "free trade." But it appears to me to be a "one-sided" free trade, for, if I understand it rightly, it means this, that all foreign nations are to have the power of inundating our shores with their products, but we shall have no corresponding advantage in return. The manufacturers of the country will find it difficult to compete with foreigners, unless they reduce wages. Already we are successfully competed with in foreign markets by the Germans, Swiss, and French, in cottons, silks, hosiery, cutlery, and many other trades; and unless we reduce wages here, I do not see how we can compete with the foreigners, when they have the great advantage of this proposed measure, and our home market opened to them in addition. We are told that the price of provisions has nothing to do with the rate of wages, yet we know how large an ingredient in wages the price of food must be; and it is impossible to see how competition can be carried on with the continental artisans, under the new measure, unless wages be reduced. It will undoubtedly come to this fact, that the workman of England will have to compete with the workman of all other nations; and we shall then see whether you are conferring so great a benefit upon him by giving him cheap provisions. But you may depend upon it, that the further you advance towards this description of free trade, the more complicated will your position become. Much stress was laid by the right hon. Baronet on the alleged withdrawal of protection from the manufacturing interests. But if any interest can stand such withdrawal of protection, it is that interest.

Look at the superior position of the manufacturer as compared with the agriculturist. How much better adapted for economizing labour is the mill than the farm! One roof covers his throng of people—all are to be observed at one glance—each has his allotted place—each his appointed task; the energies of all are taxed to the utmost, for the revolution of the wheel allows no cessation of attention. What cares the manufacturer about the weather? What matters it to him whether the sun shines or the shower falls? Can all this be said of the farmer? Can he look over his farm at one glance? Is he subjected to no vicissitudes of weather? Can he be sure of reaping what he has sown? Can his labourers work their twelve hours throughout the year as the manufacturer's? Is not the position of the manufacturer infinitely more favourable than his? Yet the manufacturer is afraid to reduce the hours of labour, for fear of foreign competition. I much doubt if manufactures and agriculture, though dependent on each other, are governed by the same rules, or the same principles. But this I know, that the agriculturist, in the race for competition which he will have to enter upon, must, if protection be withdrawn, tax his labourers' energy to the utmost. But if I carry the comparison still further, what an advantage does the manufacturer possess over the agriculturist in respect to their burdens? I hold in my hand a return from one of the largest cotton manufactories, in which I find that the work turned off in one year amounts to no less than 170,000*l.*, the wages paid thereon being upwards of 30,000*l.*, and the burdens amount to only about 530*l.*; too trifling to be talked of. How trifling also appears the alleged compensation proposed by the right hon. Baronet in favour of the agricultural interests! The consolidation of the highways, and the payment of medical officers, are too trivial to be mentioned. And as to a miserable sum of 300,000*l.* or 400,000*l.* spread over the country, I really believe that the agriculturists would have been much better pleased if the right hon. Baronet had given them nothing at all. There is one article which comes not strictly into the discussion of this question, but is closely connected with it—I mean Sugar. A very short time since, in 1844 and 1845, the Government held out to the West India Colonies a protection of 10*s.* over free-labour sugar; and the West Indians were credulous enough to believe that it would be continued them for four or five years; but before that experiment was tried—before any of the free-labour sugar had been introduced into the country, from causes which can be sufficiently explained, but which I will not now enter upon—the Government tell us that the colonists can stand little more competition. Will not the experiment be repeated next year? Shall we not most likely be told in 1848 that the West Indian colonists would derive a direct benefit from competition with the sugars of Cuba and Brazil? If you ask the agriculturist, indeed, to sell his corn at the cheapest rate, with what justice can you compel him to buy his sugar at the dearest? But when we have carried out the free-trade principles of the Government, of what use will be our Colonies? Why not have tried the experiment of free trade with them first of all? Treat them in all respects as integral parts of the Empire. Extend to them the principle of your Canadian Corn Bill—permit them to import their corn, grain, meal, and maize, and all other produce, and I will vote with you. Give them some greater benefit than you now propose, and you will draw the bonds of union closer, and knit them more firmly to the mother country. But if you give the foreigner a decided preference over them, for the contiguity of situation effects this—you make your Colonies at once a burden upon you, and you not only furnish hon. Members opposite, who wish to repudiate them altogether, with a strong argument, but you give them a direct interest to free themselves. But if these principles are to be carried out in this country, the manufacturers must no longer have a monopoly of the Colonies. You must allow them to have free trade also. You must get rid of their differential duties. You must allow your Colonies to be independent of you, and to form commercial connexions elsewhere, and you must suffer them to burst asunder the ties which a union of interests would otherwise have tended to cement. The free-trade measure of the right hon. Baronet has been called a "system of equivalents." We are told, that it is to stimulate our commercial prosperity, and that it is to set an example to the world of what is called patriotic disinterestedness. Whether the results will be what are anticipated by its author, I doubt. I fear the manufacturing activity of the country has been stimulated already too much. The increase of factories, according to Mr. Horner, is sufficiently alarming.

The progress of events will prove whether the measures now introduced are wise or not; but I fully believe that they will prove to us that we are justified in the stand we are now making against them; as I feel certain that we are contending for the best interests of the country—for the benefit of the commercial, the colonial, and especially the working interests of the Empire, in advocating protection for every branch of British industry.

Amendment having been proposed,

SIR W. HEATHCOTE: Sir, in asking permission to second the Amendment which has just been moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, I trust I shall be allowed to approach the subject under discussion without allusion to any topics of an exciting character. I wish to avoid such topics at all times, but more particularly now, when there are not wanting many persons to style the authorship of the proposed measures an act of political dishonesty. I ask the House, and I ask my right hon. Friend, to believe I disclaim the use of such weapons. It is true that I think the project visionary and illusory; that I think the right hon. Baronet has based its present necessity on grounds insufficient when taken separately, and inconsistent and destructive of each other when combined; and moreover, that in his anxiety to produce great, and, he supposes, valuable results, he has overlooked the evil of disturbing a settlement which appeared to be fixed upon the good faith—at least on the deliberate opinion—of the present House of Commons, led by himself; and that he has not sufficiently appreciated the shock to which confidence in public men is exposed when their course of action is suddenly changed, with no apparent change of circumstances, in matters concerning which the public mind has long been exercised, and opinions have been unequivocally expressed. But to suppose that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government pretended, at any former period, to entertain a conviction he did not feel, or that he has now any other view but to promote what he deems the best interests of his country, appears to me to be a gratuitous assumption, of which I cannot avail myself. I must give to the supporters of the Government measure all the advantage which is implied in conceding to them the integrity and good intentions of its propounder; but I must oppose that measure as being mischievous in itself, and without justification in reason, or from experience. The plan of the Government professes to be a large, comprehensive, and impartial scheme of what is called free trade. If it really were so, if it were not only large and comprehensive, but also perfectly impartial, I should still object to it, as a step in a downward path, and one that must undoubtedly lead to evil. I am not afraid to avow that, in my opinion, the legislation of the last twenty years in a similar direction, has produced evils far beyond what have been observed, the amount of which has been hidden, and the poison neutralized only by the enormous growth of your colonial trade—which has continued as yet to be governed on the antagonist principle; but which you are now seeking to undermine. But the scheme has not even the merit of impartiality: it is not impartial even in appearance, because it does not profess to take from all branches of our native industry the same amount of protection; it is still less so in reality, because while different branches would be so differently affected by the abstraction of an amount of protection nominally equal, as to justify some discrimination, such discrimination has, in fact, been made, sometimes without sufficiently meeting the necessity, and sometimes in an inverse ratio to its magnitude. The withdrawal of protection from our native industry will affect its different departments in proportion to the necessity of manual labour in their respective operations; and to that department in which manual labour is most necessary, and machinery is least available, no protection at all is to be awarded. There are manufactures into which machinery enters so largely, that we are able to undersell the foreigner in his own markets. These want no protection. There are others which will be exposed to ruinous competition if left without greater protection than you propose to give to them; and finally, there is agriculture, which, needing it more than any manufacture, is to be left by you without any protection at all. But, Sir, this unfairness appears to me to be the key to the right understanding of the whole. Disguise it as you will with large words, call it a great and comprehensive review of the whole commercial policy of England; still the simple fact remains, that it has originated in deference to a cry against agricultural protection alone, and that the main feature of the plan is sedulous care to make the destruction of that protection complete. Whether it ought to be so destroyed, is, as the right hon. Baronet said, a question

partly of justice and partly of policy. Now, in considering the justice of the measure, we must contrast the condition of the British farmer with that of his countrymen engaged in other pursuits, and also with the foreign agriculturists. You find him living in a country where money is plentiful, and its circulation rapid, and where, consequently, the money price of every thing he wants is extravagantly high. You find him subject to a direct taxation of peculiar and unequal severity for the numerous heads of local assessment which in other countries are defrayed from the general stock of the State. You find him subject to the Income Tax, which is now fixed for three years on the basis which the measures now under discussion propose so materially to affect. You find him embarrassed in his dealings by the operation of the Stamp Laws, and subject to all the indirect taxation of the Excise and Customs; and, finally, you find that the very nature of his business is such, that the labour of man, enhanced in price by nearly all the previous considerations, is necessary to it in a proportion unknown to manufactures—that returns for capital invested in it must always be slow, and yielding, not as in manufactures a greater comparative profit on every enlargement of the amount employed, but the contrary. But at this part of the case it is enough to glance at present, and to show how difficult it will be to adjust any measure of compensation. If it is ever to be considered as a question of compensation, no one can say—the right hon. Baronet has never pretended to say—that his proposed changes will be adequate in that view. The real question is, whether an enlarged view of national policy does not require us to stimulate national, in which I include colonial production? It would be easy to maintain the affirmative by a reference to the lucid statements, the cogent arguments, the glowing language with which it has heretofore been maintained in this House by those who now oppose it. I will not avail myself of this resource. I do not desire to produce effect by contrast, nor am I willing to suppose that those powerful speeches are forgotten by those who heard them. I am sure that I cannot efface from my own mind the effect which they produced. I cannot treat lightly the prospect of dependence on foreigners, which was once thought so dangerous; nor can I set at nought the experience which has taught us that the provision for our own people has been abundant, cheap, and regular in proportion to the encouragement which has been given to the growth of corn at home—that at this present moment the British farmer, subject to treble the taxation of fifty years ago, is enabled, under a system of encouragement, to supply nearly double the population at a price somewhat lower than at that day; and, finally, that at the very moment of the supposed emergency which drove the right hon. Gentleman to his present course, he has himself shown us that England alone, of all the countries of Europe, was well supplied; and that had she been otherwise, all those countries were prepared to close their ports. But, Sir, if doubts for the future were really pressing on the Government, they might have opened a door for supplies, which could not have been closed by the jealousy or apprehensions of foreign Governments. They might have depended upon our own Colonies. When the Canadian Corn Bill was introduced, I felt no difficulty in supporting it. I should feel no difficulty now in supporting a similar measure with respect to the Colonies of Australia. But it is not in this scheme that boons to the Colonies are to be found. On the contrary, you withdraw or diminish all that you have already given. For the first time, in our history you avow, or at least you act upon, an anti-colonial policy. You disregard those mighty foundations of your maritime power which Napoleon would have thought cheaply purchased at the price of half the Continent which he had conquered; and by the withdrawal of the substantial advantages which bind them to your distant authority, you will yourselves take the first step towards severing the connexion. With these views of the general scope and bearing of the measure, I cannot consent to forego the opportunity of voting against it as a whole, nor enter into the terms on which this or that interest may be expected to capitulate. There remains one consideration of a practical character, and apart from the merits of the case, which I have no doubt has weight with some Gentlemen on this side of the House, in inducing them to support this measure, although they may wish that it had never been introduced—I mean the doubt whether the existence of the Ministry may not be compromised by the division among their supporters. Sir, I have no disposition to underrate the importance of this consideration; I am not one of those, if such there be, who are careless whether the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues are replaced on that bench by

the noble Lord and the Friends who surround him. I have hitherto given to my right hon. Friend my support founded upon a general agreement in his course of government; and it is not because I now differ from him, even on an important point, that I shall be led away into a tranference of my support to those with whom on other subjects I have little in common, and who, on the very point concerning which I differ from my right hon. Friend, are found to coincide with him. But, Sir, I see no reason, and I recognise no right by which I should be withheld, from combining with this view a vote against the present measures of the government. My right hon. Friend, at the beginning of the Session, justly claimed for himself the credit of having resumed power, not for personal objects, but for the sake of carrying out measures which he considered to be great and patriotic. But he must concede to his supporters the right to scrutinize those measures, and to satisfy themselves whether they deserve such a character; and if he refuses them that freedom—if, on their disagreement with him, he determines to abandon the reins of government, which they do not seek to take out of his hands—on him, and not on them, be the responsibility of any mischief which may follow. I thank the House for the patience with which they have heard me, and will detain them no longer than to say, that I cordially second the Motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol.

Mr. W. LASCELLES said, the hon. Gentleman who had just concluded his address seemed to think that the country had attained the prosperity which had been its lot, entirely in consequence of the restrictions on trade which had been so long imposed upon it. He owned that the hon. Gentleman seemed to him to have read very incorrectly the history of the Empire. In his view, ever since the commencement of the time when restrictive policy began to be applied, they were visited with a series of fluctuations in the price of food which could not be otherwise than detrimental to the country. Previous to the passing of the Reform Bill the principles of free trade were not considered as belonging exclusively to any party. Mr. Huskisson was in a Tory Cabinet supported in his measures by the Whigs; and he must deny that upon the reconstruction of the Conservative party, after the Reform Bill, its commercial principles were those founded on a restrictive policy. He, for one, had never considered such a policy as the test of the Conservative party. On the eve of the general election he had considered it necessary to assert that no such principles as those of restriction were necessarily those entertained by the Conservative party; and with this view he had voted with the noble Lord opposite in 1821, when he brought forward his Budget, and he would have supported him had he been able lately to form a Cabinet. He had watched the course which Government had taken with respect to this matter very closely; and when hon. Gentlemen spoke of the danger which would accrue from the Government proposition, he replied that the very first act of the Government implied and involved the very principles now on the eve of being carried out. He had thought it impossible to listen to the speeches with which the Tariff had been prefaced, and not have seen that they inculcated the full principles of free trade. And there was proof that these speeches were so understood by hon. Gentlemen on his side the House; or why, in every successive Session of Parliament, were so many questions put to the right hon. Baronet, implying that, from the principles which he had asserted, the questioners believed that he was about to alter the Corn Laws, and requesting to know whether or not he actually and really meant that. An answer was given, which they were obliged to deem satisfactory. The right hon. Baronet told them that he had no intention of repealing the Corn Laws at the time; but that he did not regard the Corn question as one on which a Minister, responsible for the welfare of the nation, was for ever to pledge himself. Now, that was the full amount of the charge which could in fairness be brought against the right hon. Baronet. He was willing to do both the Mover and Seconder of the Amendment the justice to acknowledge, that they had not followed the course which had been taken with respect to this subject out of doors. They had rather address themselves to the actual merits of the case, than the personal topics mixed up with it. The hon. Seconder of the Amendment had told them that the country had prospered in consequence of the Corn Laws. Now, let them look at what had been the immediate effects of relaxation, wherever the principle had been carried out. He did not merely rely on the result of the measures of the right hon. Baronet, but he would take as instances of the good effect of commercial relaxation, the cases of silk, of sugar, of wool—in short, with

respect to all the articles which they could possibly bring to mind; and the fact which the advocates of a protective policy would have to refute was this—that the result of all experience, without one single exception, had confirmed every theory which the wisest men had uttered upon the subject. To this rule, he repeated, there was no exception. He did not believe that when it was applied to agriculture, there would be an exception in that case any more than in others. There might be some suffering and distress before the sound system was established; but that constituted no reason why the change to it should any longer be deferred. He had a very strong feeling on this subject. Painful as it was to do anything to break those party ties which so often cemented private friendship, he could not help expressing the satisfaction that he felt in reflecting that he had laboured to place the right hon. Baronet in the position in which he stood, in the full confidence that he would apply his great knowledge, his undoubted powers, to the satisfactory settlement of the question before them. That right hon. Gentleman had acted as he anticipated; and without wishing for a moment to diminish the merits of those hon. Gentlemen opposite who had so long, so ably, and so consistently argued against commercial restriction, still he did think that, practically speaking, the right hon. Baronet had done more than any one else for the—to his mind satisfactory—adjustment of this great question.

Lord NORREYS said, having been a supporter of the right hon. Baronet, from 1830 to the present period; having given a steady support to all the measures of the present Government, agricultural and financial, and to the whole of their Irish policy; it was with no inconsiderable regret that he felt himself compelled, not only to oppose the measure now before them, but to state also that he could place no further confidence in the right hon. Gentleman's Administration. He had waited to hear the right hon. Gentleman's explanation, and he had waited to learn the measures proposed by him before he had deserted his ranks. He thought the course which had been taken out of the House, in condemning the right hon. Baronet behind his back, and without a hearing, was unfair and unmanly. He thought it was an unconstitutional course, that attempts should have been made to pledge Members of Parliament before the measure was known; and if he had submitted to such a demand, he should have felt hinself degraded in his own eyes and those of the constituency he represented. He would further say, that he considered it unconstitutional that an association, sitting in London, should be issuing their circulars and mandates to the counties to send up delegates to interfere with the functions of Members of that House. For himself he would only say, that no course of that sort would ever influence his conduct. He thought the course which had been taken of attempting to pledge Members to consent to no alteration in the Corn Laws, was also an unwise one, because, however strong his own opinion might be, that no such necessity existed, after the letter of the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) and the resignation of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), it must have been clear to any one who knew anything of public affairs, that they stood in an entirely altered position; and a course which might have been taken previously with a fair prospect of success, could not after that be pursued. Would any one in either House of Parliament stand up, after what had occurred, and say that they were prepared to form a Government on the principle of no alteration whatever in the present Corn Laws? Yet that was the test which had been submitted to Members at the county meetings. He had thought the only thing to be done was to wait and hear what the measure was, to see whether it was worthy of their acceptance; and to do the best they could, under the altered circumstances of the case, for the agricultural interests. But he had not expected that the right hon. Baronet could have proposed such a measure as the one before them. He was ready to admit the difficulty of the position of the right hon. Baronet, when he had once made up his mind to make any alteration. He was free also to admit, that whatever had been the proposal, it would have been met with probably equal opposition from many, and even from most, of the agricultural Members. But he thought the right hon. Baronet might have obviated that difficulty in a great measure if he had taken a course which would have opened the eyes of the agriculturists to their real position; and which, until such a course was taken, they would not be aware of. If the right hon. Baronet had declined to return to power until the Government had been offered to the Duke of Richmond—and every one knew what must have been the result—that would have brought matters to a crisis at once, the agriculturists would have seen

their difficulty, and some measure more favourable might have been carried by the right hon. Baronet. As it was, it appeared to him the course that had been taken had been the one to drive the right hon. Baronet to an extensive measure. But could he (Sir R. Peel) be surprised that the agriculturists had taken the line of no alteration in the Corn Laws: they were only following the advice given them formerly by the right hon. Baronet himself, who, in 1839, when the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) was in office, advised them to make their stand on the principle of no change in the then law. On the faith of these declarations the Table of the House was loaded with petitions for no change in the then law. Was there, he would ask, less scarcity in 1839 than now? He could not have expected that the right hon. Baronet, who in 1839 had advised them to stand by the existing law; who in 1841 had so damaged the fixed duty, as they had been told by a noble Marquess in another place, that they were forced to abandon that system of protection; and who in 1842 professed to propose an adjustment of the question: he did not expect that the right hon. Baronet could have come to Parliament—he who had objected to an 8*s.* duty, which was to be permanent—to propose a 4*s.* duty, which was to end in total repeal, accompanied, too, by such a miserable compensation. What was the inference which he drew from all this? He would not accuse the right hon. Baronet of a want of political integrity: he did not believe such to be the case—he believed he had been actuated by no dishonest or dishonourable motives; but he would say, that, looking back to all these circumstances, he had shown himself to be devoid of that political foresight which entitled a public man to the confidence of his party. What the right Baronet had formerly said to the right hon. Member for Edinburgh (Mr. Macaulay), was now applicable to himself. He had said to that right hon. Member—

"Out of office you declared yourself in favour of those measures—in office you repeated the assurance that you were faithful to your principles. Will it suffice to answer, when your constituents require the fulfilment of your promises, 'I gave you no pledges—declarations in abundance I admit, but pledges I utterly disclaim?' They will remind you that they lifted you, through their favour, to the councils of the Empire. If their native tongue will not suffice, you have taught them, by reminding me of former reproaches, where they may find, in the passionate exclamation of Dido, the fit expression of their sorrow—

'Nusquam tuta fides.'

You remain deaf to their entreaties—you have nothing but the miserable answer of Æneas after all his coquetting in the cavern—

'Non hæc in fœdera veni.'

'I gave you no pledges.'"

This was something like the language of the right hon. Gentleman to his supporters the other night. If these measures were carried, they would be carried, not by the conviction of Members on that side of their wisdom or necessity; but because they saw the thing was inevitable, and they would rather see it carried by the right hon. Baronet than by the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell); he (Lord Norreys) differed with them. If the proposal of Ministers had been in favour of any protection whatever, he might have been of that opinion; but so little difference was there between the two, that he was not sure whether they might not obtain better terms from the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), in the shape of a relief from burdens: nothing could be worse than the proposal of the right hon. Baronet. He regretted much the destruction of confidence in public men which must follow if Members changed their opinions because the Minister had changed his views. Would the right hon. Baronet, who had talked of reconciling an ancient monarchy and aristocracy with a reformed House of Commons, undertake that there should be no collision between the reformed House and the aristocratic branch of the Legislature? If this state of things occurred, and a small majority in favour of protection should be returned to the next Parliament, in what a position would the right hon. Baronet have placed the Crown? If confusion should arise, then the right hon. Baronet, who had risked and brought about that confusion without justification, and not they who opposed him, must be responsible. He had treated his supporters unfairly, as well as his opponents, whom he had turned out in 1841, when they offered far better terms to the agriculturists than the right hon. Baronet was now disposed to give.

Mr. BAILIE COCHRANE was compelled to differ from the opinion expressed by some hon. Gentlemen at recent meetings of the agricultural societies, and he could not agree with them that the Corn Laws involved a Christian and religious principle. On the contrary, looking through the whole history of the Corn Laws, he could not discover any principle at all, a principle being something immutable, not taking its colour from the impulse of the moment, and beyond the influence of the circumstance and the hour. So far from a

fixed principle, he found that for five centuries posterior to the Conquest importation was free; but agricultural protection, which dated from Henry VI., gradually increased until the Revolution, when a bounty of 5*s.* was given to exportation and importation — totally forbidden until the price of wheat was 54*s.*—was subject to a duty of 8*s.* between that price and 80*s.* This, with occasional variations, remained in operation until Lord North's Act, in 1773, reduced the protection to 44*s.*; but in 1791 the agricultural was again the predominant interest, and greatly favoured until 1815, when the duty amounted to a prohibition. Then followed the Act of 1822, and afterwards Mr. Grant's Resolutions in 1828; in 1842 the present measure was passed, which he for one supported, and which it was now proposed entirely to overthrow. Where then was the lurking-place of this principle, if it did exist? Through what strange scenes and changes had it passed! If there was a Corn Law faith, it admitted of every diversity of heresy. If he might be permitted the opinion, he thought the agriculturists were saying too much, when they asserted a Corn Law principle. He would rather adopt the language of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, and term the Corn Laws an accident or an expedient, subject, as all expedients must be, to the influence of time and circumstances. There was another point on which he (Mr. Cochrane) differed from the agriculturists, in the opinion which they expressed that this Parliament ought not to meddle with the present Corn Law without making an appeal to the people. On this very point Mr. Pitt, in 1798, on the question of the Legislative Union, expressed himself in the following terms:—

"If this principle of the incompetency of Parliament be admitted, or fi it be contended that Parliament has no authority to discuss or decide upon this measure, you will be driven to the necessity of recognizing a principle the most dangerous ever adopted in a State—the principle that Parliament cannot adopt any new measure of great importance without an appeal to the constituent body. This idea may be traced to that gross perversion of the principles of all political society, which supposes that there rests continually a sovereignty in abeyance, on the part of the people, to be called forth whenever it suits the interest of party or of faction."

Why, when a Parliament elected for three years passed the Septennial Bill, and another, the great majority of whose members were elected on the cry of opposition to Catholic Emancipation, passed the Emancipation Bill by a majority of 178, it would be difficult to define the limit of Parliamentary competency. To adopt such a principle as that laid down by the hon. Gentleman would be to turn the House into an assembly of delegates. This being a deliberative and legislative Assembly, it is presumed that hon. Gentlemen are in some measure influenced by arguments and deliberation; and he could not think that its character would be raised if hon. Members were never to give an opinion without a recorded permission. The right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government had been accused of gross inconsistency. But when he looked back to the histories of other public men, he did not find any greater consistency. Hon. Gentlemen quoted from *Hansard*, but *Hansard* was an arsenal from which all sides might select their arms. One hon. Gentleman would quote Mr. Huskisson in 1814, another, Mr. Huskisson in 1827 or 1828. Mr. Canning, when in 1827 he proposed his Corn Law Resolutions, stated that if he had been in the House in 1815, he should have suggested that measure. Why, Lord Ashburton, the now protector of protection, in 1820 presented a petition from the merchants and traders of the city of Londan, praying for total free trade. *Facies non omnibus una.* There was scarcely one public man who had devoted his attention to the Corn Laws who had not been compelled to change his opinion; and what did this prove? That all public men were dishonest, and that public virtue had no existence? This he thought, on whichever side of the argument, would be an unfair assumption; it rather proved that the question was one full of difficulties, ever varying with the seasons and the times; that there might be some truth in Mr. Sydney Smith's dictum, "whoever talks of an unalterable law, is an unalterable fool;" that events in politics were not like equal quantities in mathematics, always the same, or like the great abstract truths of morality, eternal and invariable in their nature. He was one of those who did lament those harsh necessities which hurried men on from change to change; but to lament was not to prevent, and for God's sake let them look at the state of the world as it is and was, not as it should be. Let them look at the movements which had taken place within the last sixteen years; the development of industries, the progress of invention, the extended intercourse—America within the last six years brought within twelve days, China within two months, goods conveyed forty

miles an hour, letters sent from Penzance to Caithness for one penny. With all this movement, could the mind of the Legislator alone remain unchanged? And then let them regard the great fact of the population doubled within 40 years, and increasing half a million annually—increasing through the expansion of that trade which broke the alliance between Napoleon and Alexander, and which had extended our colonial intercourse to the farther quarters of the globe. Above all, could they ever forget that the Reform Bill had passed? That reform which the hon. Baronet the Member for Cornwall truly styled a revolution. The consequences of that measure never could die—and who were the Ministers who passed it? Why, among others, the noble Duke at the head of the agricultural societies, a noble Lord who had seceded, and a noble Earl who, it was supposed, would secede from Her Majesty's Government. These were the Ministers who compelled the Crown and the aristocracy to yield to clamour; and these noble Lords, who threatened "to swamp" the House of Peers, now stand up in defence of the landed interest of this nation. In the present state of the country, he (Mr. Cochrane) thought that the best security for its tranquillity and the general happiness would be found in a strong Government—a Government strong in the confidence of the nation, and respected abroad. He believed that the country had confidence in the present Government. This was proved by the fact, that during the three days' reign of the noble Lord the Member for the city of London, not the English funds alone but the French and Austrian funds fell; and that there should be no question of the cause of this declension, they rose again as soon as the right hon. Gentleman reassumed office. Now, if not England alone, but Europe generally, had, by the financial thermometer, proved the confidence reposed in Her Majesty's Government, might not the opinions of hon. Gentleman be coloured by this circumstance? Might they not be disposed to place greater confidence in the right hon. Gentleman than in the noble Lord? But above all, might they not mistrust the noble Lord, when he mistrusted himself, and returned back to Edinburgh, adding one other to the Chronicles of the Canongate? In every constitutional country he thought a responsible Government was essential, and that a party not strong enough to form a Government should disband itself, as not carrying with it the sympathies of the nation. The question in politics must at all times be, what can you do? The speech of the noble Lord the Member for Oxfordshire (Lord Norreys) hit this mark, and it was the best he had heard on the protection side; he plainly said, "What are you able to accomplish? You talk of 'no surrender;' but the noble Duke at the head of the Agricultural Association, with his military experience, will tell you the reply to that is 'no master;' and the flag which you talk of nailing to the mast will only serve to show the portion of the wreck." If the right hon. Gentleman had come down to the House and had proposed to sacrifice the Corn Law to popular clamour, he, whatever change had been effected in his own feelings, might have declined to support the measure; or even had he, remembering that the Roman sibyl demanded a greater price for her volumes the longer the purchase was delayed, talked about concession, and endeavoured to anticipate future necessities by a partial sacrifice of conviction, he would have protested against the motives; but the right hon. Gentleman, on the contrary, openly avowed the change in his opinions, and founded his present measures on the success of his former policy. And let hon. Members imagine any person, if such could be found, unshackled by prejudices of party feelings, shown, as from an eminence, the vast resources, the commercial enterprise, the extended industries of this great country; let him be told that all this greatness had grown up with free institutions, which, like the waters which roll around our shores, separate us from Continental Powers—institutions, the admiration of every country, and which no country had yet successfully imitated; let him be told, that of the Ministers who achieved this greatness, the majority had been in favour of relaxation of commercial restrictions; that this had been the Tory policy—it was that of Lord North, of Mr. Pitt, Mr. Huskisson, Mr. Canning—the language of Mr. Pitt, when he proposed a commercial treaty with France in 1787, might have been used by the right hon. Gentleman on introducing his measure the other night; let this same person be told that every step taken towards the relaxation of protecting duties had been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the welfare, the morality, and the general happiness of the country, and that this same statesman who had achieved these great ends promised

results still greater, a still increasing prosperity, by continuing the same course of policy—should they accuse such a person of a too sanguine credulity, and an overwrought imagination, if he believed that free commerce claimed kindred with free institutions. When the measure of 1842 was passed, he said that he thought a total repeal was preferable to a state of uncertainty, and that the farmers suffered more from constant doubt than they could do from a sacrifice of protection. Well, he would appeal to any agriculturist whether, since that period, there had been any confidence in the present law? On all sides it was heard that the Corn Laws were doomed. Men differed as to the period of their continuance; some said two, some five, others ten years; but that they must sooner or later go, all men were agreed. Now was this a state of things which should have continued? Hon. Gentlemen might say that this was because the country had no confidence in the Government; but the truth was, there was a great change of opinion in the country. All the meetings which had been held were meetings of landlords; and, in spite of this agitation, the price of land was rising. In Scotland, the farmers told him they cared nothing for the Corn Laws. It was very true they had nineteen-year leases; but he believed that if leases were more general in England, it would affect English farmers as little. At all events, that was his conviction. He knew that he was liable to misconstruction; but he thought, if it was a base act to make a sacrifice of opinion, it was an act of still greater cowardice not to follow conviction through the fear of misconstruction. In party feeling there was rarely any *juste milieu;* the people were generally in extremes, and in times of excitement a Minister was always declared to be either the father of his country or a traitor. So in ancient Rome, the Senate debated whether to pronounce Adrian a god or a tyrant. He did not believe the right hon. Baronet either one or the other; but he did believe him anxious to do his best for the country in very difficult emergencies; and, inspired with this belief, he would recall to hon. Gentlemen on that side of the House the occurrences of 1830, when they turned the right hon. Gentleman out of office by a coalition with the Opposition, and the consequences were eleven years of Whig rule. Sir (said the hon. Gentleman) I vote for this measure, because I have confidence in the financial policy of the right hon. Gentleman. It is precisely the principle of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, who votes against the measure, because he has no confidence in the right hon. Baronet. He is following at an humble, and at how far humbler distance, the opinion of Mr. Canning, who said, in 1802—

> "Away with the cant of measures not men, of the idle supposition that it is the harness and not the horses which drag the chariot along."

I vote for this measure, because I prefer legislation to agitation; moreover, because I am a sincere advocate for protection. Yes, Sir, for protection not to one class, to one interest, however important, but protection to all classes, to all interests, foreign and domestic—protection in hours of darkness and trouble, which, I pray God, may be far from us, but which, we cannot conceal from ourselves, may depend on the life of one man in France, or on party cry in America—protection when another northern confederacy may threaten our shores, and hostile fleets threaten our colonial empire—the protection of a strong and vigorous Administration; but, above all, I vote for this measure because, in the beautiful language of the prayer which we hear each day, I would set aside all private interests, prejudices, and partial affections, and lend my humble but most sincere endeavours to any settlement which those whose peculiar province it is to rule the destinies of this great country may judge conducive to the comfort and welfare of the poorer but not less loyal classes of my fellow subjects.

Mr. DEEDES was perfectly aware, that in rising to address the House on so important a subject, and at so early a period of the debate, he was laying himself open to the charge of great presumption; but when that importance was duly considered, not with reference only to his constituents, but with regard to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, he could assure the House that nothing but an imperative sense of duty compelled him to offer himself to the notice of the House, a portion of whose liberal indulgence he hoped to share—such as they were wont to bestow on those who, like himself, laboured under the disadvantage of addressing them for the first time. He was much tempted on the night when the right hon. Baronet propounded his measures to the House to have offered his sentiments on the subject; but he was restrained from so doing, partly because it appeared to him that the merits of the subject should not be entered into, but principally because he was desirous of removing from

himself the imputation of being supposed to have formed a hasty and premature judgment on a most important question, and to have arrived at conclusions which maturer consideration would not have warranted him in doing. He was glad now that he had abstained upon that occasion, because he had since an opportunity (and a most gratifying one it was to him) of meeting in his own county a very large body of his constituents, and of hearing their opinions upon this important subject. Although his own individual opinion might not of itself be of any weight, yet when it was fortified by the unanimous opinion of a large body of practical men, met together for the purpose of forming a deliberate judgment upon a question with which they were amply qualified to deal; he hoped that the opinion which he was now in their name, and in his own, about to express, would be received more favourably than if he were to speak it only for himself. He would take this opportunity of assuring the hon. Member for Finsbury (Mr. Wakley), who was kind enough upon a former evening to give a caution to those who sat on the Ministerial side of the House, as to the mode in which they intended to employ the intervening time before this debate commenced; and to take care how they stirred up the angry passions of the people, and had recourse to agitation; he could assure that hon. Gentleman that at the meeting to which he had alluded, those warnings had been most carefully regarded; and that if the hon. Gentleman himself had been present, he would have seen that his friendly advice had been followed to the utmost. No conduct could be more decorous; no angry feeling was allowed to be embarked in the consideration of the great question which engaged the attention of the meeting. The same hon. Member told the House that he had not been in the habit of attending the meetings of the League, and he took shame to himself for not having done so. With the feeling regarding agitation which the hon. Gentleman then expressed, he could not but regret that the hon. Gentleman had not more frequently attended those meetings, because he thought that the example of the hon. Gentleman might have had influence enough to have suppressed much of that angry and violent language which had been used there, and which, while it aroused the passions of the people, did not tend to elicit the truth connected with the subject under discussion. He had described that subject to be one of great and paramount importance; and he ventured to believe that the hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. Cobden), who was one of the strongest opponents of the Corn Laws, would consider that it was so. Why, the question involved nothing more or less than whether they should wipe from the Statute Book those legislative enactments for the protection of native industry, which the wisdom of their forefathers originally placed there, and which had been continued by the united wisdom of men of different political opinions, all equally anxious, no one could doubt, for the welfare of this great country. And let it not be forgotten that, under the operation of these very laws, this country had arrived at that eminence in the scale of nations which had so long been her glory. It appeared to have been reserved for those who guided the councils of the nation at the present moment to have made the discovery that those laws, which we had been in the habit of considering right, and wise, and prudent, and safe, were quite the reverse; that they ought to be expunged from the Statute Book; and that, on the contrary, we were bound only to legislate in such a manner as should open the door to foreigners, and enable them to compete with us in our markets, and drive the corn of this country out of that market. If the extent of the change which the House was now called upon to make was considered, it might be supposed that, for some reason or other, laws of this description were only to be revised and altered once in a hundred years at least. It might be supposed that within the last hundred years nothing had been done; but that now, circumstances had so changed, as to call for and justify an entire revolution with respect to these laws. No one would think it possible, that only in 1842, these measures were revised, and received the deliberate sanction of both Houses of Parliament, and that at that time the principle of protection was avowed and acknowledged. What might be said by those who should hereafter search the pages of history, to account for this change, when they found that the Gentlemen who, in 1842, sanctioned the laws which were now found upon the Statute Book, were the same Gentlemen who, in 1846, were desirous to strike them out of the Statute Book, he could not tell. It would be for those who advised that measure to justify the change; and as he believed they acted honestly, he doubted not, in their own convictions, they were doing what they believed to be right,

and what they could justify. He was the last man to oppose the doctrine that public men were not to be allowed to change their opinions upon great and public matters; but it must be done with care and caution —it must be done in such a manner as not to shake public confidence in them. Either on this or any other public subject, he desired to avoid imputing motives to any man. He would assure the right hon. Baronet, that on this as well as on every other occasion, whether in public or in private, he had never believed that he had been actuated, in any course of policy he might have adopted, by other than conscientious motives. In early life, he had always been in the habit of looking up to the right hon. Baronet as his political leader; but he had never hesitated to oppose the measures brought forward by the right hon. Baronet of which he could not approve. So long ago as the Emancipation Bill, in 1829, he, as a member of Convocation, not being able to approve of the course which the right hon. Baronet then took, had felt it his painful duty, along with others, to resist the right hon. Baronet's return as one of the Members for the University of Oxford. In the last Session of Parliament he opposed, most reluctantly, his measure with reference to Maynooth; and he mentioned this only to take the opportunity of saying that, though he differed from the right hon. Baronet on these great public questions, he had never doubted for one moment that the right hon. Baronet was actuated by honest and proper motives. On the first night of the Session, the right hon. Baronet had stated the fears which he entertained, together with the rest of Her Majesty's Ministers on the subject of the failure of the potato crop. He made the utmost possible allowance for the feelings that actuated the right hon. Baronet at that time. He much feared that we did not now know nearly the half the suffering that was impending upon the unfortunate poor in Ireland. He quite believed it; and he, for one, should have been ready and willing to have assented to any measure that might have removed, for a time, the restrictions on foreign corn, if it had been considered necessary for the relief of their suffering fellow subjects in Ireland. And he believed there was not a member of any agricultural protection society—however much abused those institutions might be—who would not cheerfully have joined in that measure, to have rendered such meed of relief as he was able to do, towards those who suffered so severely. But he could not go further with the right hon. Baronet. Giving him credit for those feelings, he did not think it necessarily followed that the Corn Law of 1842 was therefore to be altered. That measure had exceeded the most sanguine expectations of its framers; under that measure, the producer had received no more than a fair profit for the article he brought to market, and the consumer had not been called on to pay an extravagant price. The right hon. Baronet had instanced, also, the thriving state of the country during the last three years. But it must not be forgotten, that during those three years the country had been under the operation of that amended and revised law of 1842, which was brought in by the right hon. Baronet himself. And yet the right hon. Baronet called upon them to expunge that law. He could see no reasons for doing so; and therefore, anxious as he might be to support the right hon. Baronet on general quessions, he could not give a vote in favour of the proposed alteration, contrary to the best judgment he was able to form. The right hon. Baronet had expressed a hope that our manufactures would be taken in exchange for foreign corn; but the right hon. Baronet had admitted, at the same time, that, up to the present moment, the reverse had been the case. He asked, then, with the greatest confidence, was not this measure of the right hon. Baronet an experiment to be tried upon the native industry of his country? And if it was so—fraught as he believed such an experiment to be with danger to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects—supported as it might be by arguments said to be irresistible from all sides of the House, still he would not yield his judgment, and give way where he believed there was danger to be anticipated. He could not but fear that, if the measure the right hon. Baronet now proposed became the law of the land, the day was not far distant when this country must be dependent upon foreign produce for a supply of the first necessary of life. He should deprecate exceedingly the possibility of such a contingency; and the very argument which the right hon. Baronet had used on the first night of the Session with reference to the supply of potatoes to be obtained from abroad, served to strengthen the conclusion at which he (Mr. Deedes) had arrived. For he had said that in looking round to see whence could be had a supply of potatoes, to replace the extensive failure

in Ireland, he had found that Belgium, Sweden, and other potato-growing countries had placed restrictions upon the exportation of the article, and would not allow it to come in aid of our failing crops. Could it be doubted that, under similar circumstances, foreign nations would, for their own sakes, adopt a similar course? He required no further argument than that to induce him to withhold his support from the right hon. Baronet. He was aware the right hon. Baronet had said he did not believe there would be a material diminution in the price of corn. But he asked if the gentlemen of the League held that doctrine; did they intend that there should be no reduction in the price of corn? Did not they say, we want cheap corn because we expect the people of this country, when they can buy their food at a little cost, to lay out the surplus in the purchase of our manufactures? There was one point connected with this subject which had been so often alluded to, especially at meetings of the League, that he was desirous to address a few words to the House upon it; but he had better, perhaps, read an extract from a letter which he had received from a friend on the subject, because that would better explain his views: he referred to the consideration of the measure before the House as a landlord's question. The extract was as follows:—

"Argument for free trade in corn will be urged on the ground that, whatever necessity there may be for purposes of revenue to continue duties on less important commodities, articles of subsistence are the last that should be taxed. Granted. Give the cultivator fair play. Exempt him from taxation, and he will readily meet the world in his own field of industry. The bounty of Providence, the principle of fertility, will always ensure an ample profit to his industry and skill. But the question before the country is not whether articles of subsistence ought to be taxed. They are taxed, and that to an enormous amount. The question is, whether this taxation shall bear entirely on the producer, or whether it shall be partly distributed among the consumers, by the operation of the present system of Corn Law? The price of every other article comprises not only the cost of production, and a profit on that cost, but also whatever tax or duty may have been imposed on it by the State. Why should the produce of land be an exception to this rule? The answer will be that, so long as the producer obtains a price sufficient to give him a profit, he is not prejudiced by the alleged taxation—he may fairly bear it; and the weight cannot justly be transferred to the consumer, especially with respect to an article which is the first necessary of life, and the price of which so materially affects the poorest classes. Land, however highly taxed, yields this profit, as is proved by the existence of a further surplus—namely, rent. A Corn Law, therefore, makes the consumer pay the landlord's rent; and the whole question is a landlord's question, and nothing else. Rejoinder:—Rent is not a direct object in this question; it is incidental to it, and nothing beyond that. The relation of landlord and tenant is that of joint capitalists in the production of corn, &c. The occupier finds moveable capital, labour, seed, horses, implements; the owner finds fixed capital, dwelling-house, barns, stables, dairies, granaries, cart and waggon-sheds, cattle-lodges, piggeries, fences, gates, &c. On the poorest soils which pay for cultivation, the landlord receives little if anything more than his proportion of profit on his fixed capital, deducting land-tax, quit rents, &c. Are these less fertile soils to be cultivated? Can the nation afford to lose them? That is the question. If they are to be retained by adequate prices, then those prices will give an increased profit to lands of superior quality, through all the degrees from the lowest to the highest. House-rent is an incident to the great and main question whether the vast breadth of inferior and highly-taxed soils is to be abandoned, under the discouragement of inadequate price occasioned by foreign competition of comparatively untaxed corn raised on superior soils abroad at a far less cost."

Now, he entirely coincided in that view which his friend had taken of this question. He thought the proposition of the right hon. Baronet might have the effect of throwing the poorer soils of this country out of cultivation. He had detained the House, perhaps, too long; and he would not now pass those measures in strict review which might be called an off-set to the measure which the right hon. Baronet had proposed. Whenever they were introduced, he would give them his best attention; and he thought many of them were very good, but he did not consider that they ought to have been added to a revision of the Corn Laws. Entertaining these views generally—dreading, above all things, to see this country at any time dependent on foreign nations during the scarcity of so important an article as the bread by which we lived—fearing, also, that if we had to purchase corn from foreign countries, the specie of this country must go out to pay for it, and, consequently, there would be a reduction of that specie in the Bank of England which enabled other banks to have a larger issue—and dreading the consequences of such a paper restriction on the country—looking at this, and bearing in mind the language of the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues in 1842 on this question, he could not allow himself, against his own convictions, to follow him and vote for the measure before the House. He should sit down with a fervent prayer that it would please Divine Providence, who had hitherto exalted this nation, still to guide its destiny so as to make it an example of good government at home, and fairness, and mode-

ration, and justice in its dealings with foreign nations.

Sir J. WALSH observed, that the Members for agricultural counties must naturally be desirous of addressing the House on this subject: they had every motive which could urge them to do so, and they had every claim which justice could give them upon the patient and forbearing attention of the House. It must be allowed that they were the representatives of a great and important interest. It must, too, be admitted that they are the organs of wide-spread opinions; and if those opinions had lost some of their weight in the minds of the right hon. Baronet and his colleagues, they were still the opinions of a large and influential portion of the community. They were further entitled to a hearing, because, on the present occasion, they appeared to defend themselves from charges and imputations of a personal character, which had been recklessly and unjustifiably levelled at them, through the length and breadth of the land, and that, too, by hon. Gentlemen who had hitherto refrained from taking part in this discussion. Those who had so studiously preserved a stubborn silence, as to excite a remark the other evening, had held up the landed proprietors, in all parts of the country, as the corrupt and sordid advocates of an odious and selfish monopoly. They had been represented by those hon. Gentlemen as actuated by no other motive, and impelled by no other aim, than that of maintaining and upholding their rents as landlords, in opposition to the best interests of the great masses of the community. They had, moreover, to present themselves to the House, on that occasion, under the great disadvantage of being deprived of those upon whose assistance they had hitherto calculated, and under whose leadership they had hitherto marched. They certainly had, by the sudden change of the right hon. Baronet, lost the most powerful advocate of their cause, and upon whom on former occasions they were accustomed entirely to rely. The right hon. Baronet had accompanied this measure with others that were termed measures of compensation. He had forgotten, however, in the enumeration, to allude to one, which appeared to him (Sir J. Walsh) of far more importance than any he had stated. It was this—that by his policy he had imposed upon the agricultural Members the duty, and taught them the lesson of self-reliance. Hereafter they must be prepared to fight their own battles, to defend their own opinions, and to vindicate their own characters. He begged to say, that he denied in the strongest and most emphatic terms that the landed proprietors considered this as a question of rent—of rent only. But before he addressed himself to that part of the question, he would say, that if they were to argue this question on that ground, and consider it merely on the narrow basis of rent, he would even in that case assert that the question was one of the very greatest importance, not solely to those interested in rent, but to the community at large, and deserving the most careful consideration of the House. What, he asked, was the amount of the landed rental of this country? It appeared by a Return which had been made on the Motion of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, in 1843, that the amount assessed for Income Tax was 45,750,000*l.* as the rental of Great Britain alone, exclusive of the rental of Ireland, from which no return was made. He was unable to state precisely what was the rental of Ireland; but he could not be in error in assuming that it must be from 15,000,000*l.* to 20,000,000*l.* Taking this, then, as a narrow question of rent, and admitting that the preservation of rent was the motive which solely actuated the landed proprietors, it must also be admitted that a question involving no less a sum than 60,000,000*l.* a year—a large integral portion of the wealth of the nation—more than double the amount of the interest of the national debt, exceeding the amount of the whole export trade of the country—demanded respect and consideration as deeply affecting the prosperity of the nation? How was that wealth distributed? When hon. Gentlemen used the words "landlords" and "rent" in their addresses throughout the country, nothing else was suggested to the minds of their hearers but the owners of great territorial possessions, such as the Duke of Northumberland, or the Duke of Devonshire, or the Duke of Bedford—noblemen who had half a county under their sway—or some of the great landed gentry, who by the antiquity of their families, and the extent of their estates, might be regarded as the rivals of the highest and greatest of the Peerage. Those who presented such portraitures to the public, entertained most mistaken views on this question. There were whole counties in England in which there was scarcely one large mass of property collected together worthy to be called an estate, but in which,

on the contrary, the property was subdivided in every way—in which property was owned by every class of individuals—in great part by yeomen, who had inherited the land from their forefathers, owned small plots of land, and cultivated the farms on which they lived. Another most numerous class of landlords were small retired tradesmen, who, with that love of rural life which was almost a natural instinct with Englishmen, had invested all the savings of a life of industry and successful enterprise in land. Mr. M'Culloch, an authority of great weight, estimated the number of landed proprietors in this country at 200,000. There were then 200,000 landed proprietors, without considering their families or dependents, who were directly interested in the question of rent. He said, that even on that ground this question was not to be considered as one concerning the interest of a small and narrow class. If it were a class interest it involved the fortunes of a great portion of the population of this country. But when they considered the pecuniary amount involved in it—its collateral bearings, and wide ramifications—the property that by various engagements, by marriage and other settlements, was bound up in it—it was a question not to be separated from that of the national prosperity itself. But then this was considering the question as one of rent, and rent alone. That was the view to which hon. Gentlemen opposite assumed that they restricted it, and to which the agriculturists refused to restrict it. They said this was a question which, from its nature, must involve the interests of the tenant-farmers and the agricultural labourers. The right hon. Gentleman who brought forward this measure introduced and supported it, on the ground that the general impulse which the relaxation of protecting duties would give to the industry of the country, and the greater facilities which it would afford to the farmers in purchasing articles which they made use of in their occupations—that the greater cheapness of all these articles would be an equivalent for the loss sustained by the withdrawal of protection. That was the argument of the right hon. Gentleman, and he wished he could be as well convinced that the right hon. Gentleman was correct, as he was assured that he was sincere in making that statement. But the right hon. Gentleman assumed that the profits of the agriculturists would not be diminished. If the profits of agriculture were not diminished, then neither would rents, or the wages of the labourer; for rents depended not upon any particular price of corn, but upon the amount of the profits of agriculture. The agriculturists took a less cheering view of the subject. They considered that the competition to which the farmer would be exposed from foreigners would beat down his profits; that he would have no chance of contending successfully against that competition; and that a great reduction of the profits of agriculture would be the result. The necessary consequences must be, that the tenant-farmers and agricultural labourers would all suffer. Either of these results was possible. Let it be granted that the right hon. Gentleman's hopes and promises might be fulfilled, or that what he, on the contrary, feared might come to pass—either was a possible result; but that which he contended was an impossible result—that which was an absurdity—that which was in contradiction to every sound doctrine of political economy and to the dictates of common sense, was, that the tenant-farmers and agricultural labourers were not to suffer, and that the whole loss of those changes would fall on the landlord's head. That, he said, was what he considered as utterly impossible. Hon. Gentlemen opposite were extremely fond of arrogating to themselves the sole knowledge of the doctrines and principles of political economy, and of assuming that they alone were acquainted with the writings of Adam Smith, of Chalmers, of Torrens, of Ricardo, and M'Culloch—that political economy was, in fact, a sealed book to the agriculturists; but he humbly said to those hon. Gentlemen, that the theory of rent was one of the best-grounded theories in political economy, on which the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down had given in the letter that he read, a practical commentary. That theory, which was simple and plain, assumed very justly that the most fertile land was the first taken into cultivation, and as the wants of the community increased the less fertile land was cultivated. Rent, therefore, was only the difference of value between the best and worst land in cultivation, and its amount was at once an index to the general welfare and to the continual national improvement. It was an important corollary from this doctrine, that the application of additional capital to raise additional produce from old land, was in principle and results the same. Whether they applied 1,000*l.* in extracting additional

produce from the land already enclosed, or in enclosing inferior land to have that amount of produce, the consequence was exactly similar. What then must be the result of pouring foreign corn into the market? If it lessened the profit of the agriculturist, this process would be reversed. The advantage that was gained by the profits from the superior land was an encouragement to the application of capital to inferior land—an inducement to the employment of industry by the taking of the less fertile soils into cultivation; and the contrary operation would be—the necessary consequence of pouring foreign corn into the markets would be—to diminish the profits of those engaged in agriculture—to diminish employment for the labourer, by interfering with the tenant-farmer, who, no longer able to employ capital with profit, must withdraw it from the cultivation of the land. The whole of the agricultural interest would thus participate in the depression that would be caused. Nothing could be more plain or nothing a more legitimate deduction from the theory of rent than this—that where, supposing in the Lothians, the rent of land was reduced from 4*l.* to 2*l.* an acre, that which reduced the rent so much would absorb the whole profits of the rent in a less cultivated district, where the rent, perhaps, was only 1*l.* an acre, and in doing so would deprive the labourer of employment, and the farmer of his income. But then it had been assumed that the Legislature had been guilty of a gross fraud upon the farmer—that when there was a protecting duty of 80*s.*, the farmers also calculated on receiving the price of 80*s.*—that when the protecting duty was reduced to 70*s.*, they again calculated upon receiving that price—that the farmer had made his calculation upon the acts of the Legislature, and in doing so had been perpetually deceived. He totally denied that that was a true representation of the case. The farmers were much too intelligent persons to have ever made such calculations. They knew that the introduction of foreign corn was not the only cause of fluctuations in price—that the trade in corn was in its very nature fluctuating—that the natural variety and diversity of seasons made it so—that Providence itself had so ordained it—and that all the legislation in the world could not make it regular and unchanging—that the price of corn must be affected by the alterations in the circulating medium—that it must be dependent upon changes in the atmosphere—on the condition of manufacturers—on the state of the community: all these constituted ingredients in the calculations of the farmer, and by these he knew at all times that the price of the article he produced must be affected. All these were causes which the farmer calculated upon; but what he said was this—"In consequence of all these causes, I know that my trade, in the natures of things, must always be a fluctuating trade. I know that I may be exposed to loss, perhaps to ruin, from the variation of the seasons, and other causes which no human foresight could have averted or changed. But when my trade is in itself liable to such great fluctuations, I do ask you to protect me against that additional cause of fluctuation—that competition with the foreigner, which I shall be totally unable to support, and which, with other causes, must inevitably sink my trade to the lowest possible point of depression." There was another very important consideration for this House to deal with in passing this measure, and it was this—what were the evils which it was called upon to remedy? What was the state of things now subsisting, and which for a long time had subsisted in this country, which called for the application of an experiment that its best advocates must own to be, in some degree at least, a hazardous and perilous one? The right hon. Baronet (Sir. R. Peel) relied on the experience—the short and limited, and as he (Sir J. Walsh) thought, the inconclusive experience of the last three years. In reviewing that great question they might be permitted to take rather a wider scope, to go further back, and ask what had been the results of the protective system during the last thirty years? Since 1815, although no doubt the Corn Law had been subjected to several changes and modifications, yet upon the whole the principle had been one of a high valid protective duty. And what had been accomplished under that system of protection? From 1815 to 1845 the population of this country had increased from somewhere about 13,000,000 to something over 19,000,000; and with this augmentation of 6,000,000 of people, what had been the history of our commerce and manufactures in that period? Hon. Gentlemen opposite were constantly telling them that protective laws had the effect of restricting commerce—that it was thereby confined and fettered, that it was prevented from expanding as it would otherwise have done, and that it had not attained its natural development. But

if they looked at the facts, they would see that in no country in the world, and at no period in the world's history, had commerce and manufactures been developed with such extraordinary and surprising rapidity, as had all our great staple manufactures in the course of the last thirty years. Whether they turned to the cotton, the woollen, or the iron manufacture, they would discover that whilst there were different rates of progress, there was an immense advance in all. In the face of, and in addition to, all this, they found that our great additional population was maintained and supported, with an occasional contribution of grain, indeed, from foreign countries, but still to no great extent; and the price of corn was considerably reduced from the price it bore at the commencement of this period. It was impossible to deny these great results. It was impossible to deny that they spoke strongly in favour of a system which had produced a state of prosperity and of progressive advance, unparalleled in the annals of the world. Hon. Gentlemen opposite said, "It is true that your agriculture has been extremely progressive. You have made great advances; you have been enabled to nourish those six additional millions of people; but you have now arrived at the extreme verge; you cannot improve any more; we must now look to other sources for the nourishment of the population, for you cannot add any more quarters of wheat to the quarters of wheat you have already raised." Why, so far from this being the case, there never was a period in which agriculture was more ready to take a great stride in advance, than at the present moment. There never was a period in which capital was more ready to seek investment in agriculture, if it received security, than at the present moment. The great improvements which had of late been effected, the discoveries of Mr. Smith, of Deanston, the improvements in the methods of tillage and drainage, the various information respecting agriculture which had been circulated by means of that most useful society, the Royal Agricultural Society of England, in the most distant parts of the country, and in places where improvement had hitherto been unknown, had created a spirit and desire for further improvement which only required the security which legislation could give, to make the most rapid strides. So far from agriculture in this country having reached its utmost limit, and being unable to provide for the wants of an additional population, he believed from the bottom of his soul that it was now only in its infancy, and that we should see the greatest improvement if we did but persevere in that course which experience showed had already effected so much good. One subject which had been very much discussed in that House, and upon which the agricultural interest were wont formerly to rest a considerable portion of the strength of their case, was the "peculiar burdens" which affected land. Now, for some time past hon. Gentlemen opposite had taken upon themselves to controvert altogether that position. They had taken upon themselves to deny that there were any peculiar burdens affecting land. The hon. Member for Montrose (Mr. Hume) had endeavoured to establish that as a fact at least twelve years ago; and he had been followed by the hon. Member for Sheffield (Mr. Ward). Now he was of opinion that both those hon. Gentlemen had been led into very considerable errors in reference to this subject. Their argument he conceived to be this:—They said, "You state that the local taxation falls entirely on the agriculturists; but when we look into the statistical accounts and examine the official documents which bear upon this question, we find that so far from this being the case, a great deal of this taxation falls upon other species of real property—upon houses, upon mines, and other descriptions of property, beside land. Therefore yours is not that exclusive burden which you pretend it is." The agriculturists replied, "We never did pretend that it was an 'exclusive' burden, but we say it is a burden which falls with peculiar weight upon the agricultural interest. It presses us down more than it presses down manufacturers and people engaged in trade." His noble Friend the Member for South Lancashire (Lord Francis Egerton), in moving the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, remarked very justly that agriculture was itself a manufacture—that it was a manufacture of the raw produce. Now in this manufacture of raw produce we must compare ourselves with the producers of other saleable commodities. Houses were not producing commodities; but land was, as his noble Friend said, a producing machine. They must, therefore, compare it with trade and manufactures; and in comparison with trade and manufactures he contended that agriculture did bear a very heavy burden, from which trade and manufactures were altogether exempt. Let them take an illustration. Let them suppose the metropo-

litan police rate was estimated at 100,000*l.* a year, and that by some very unjust distribution the shoemakers only paid the whole expense of the police. The shoemakers would naturally turn to the tailors, cabinet-makers, and other trades, and say, "We labour under a very great disadvantage. The metropolitan police force is for the benefit of the whole town, and you tax us with the whole maintenance and support of it. Moreover, we find that the shoemakers of Reading, Northampton, Birmingham, and other places, who are not subject to this tax, can therefore make their shoes cheaper than we can, and send them to London and undersell us." Now that would be very nearly the case of the agriculturists, as regarded the other trades and manufactures of this country. The repeal of the Corn Law appeared to be advocated by two great parties: by those who, like the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, contended that, whilst repeal would be beneficial to commerce and manufactures, it would not be injurious to the profits of agriculture; and by those who were prepared to embrace it as a positive good, even though it might be purchased by the sacrifice of the whole agricultural interest. Now he conceived that it was impossible that either of the leaders of the two great parties in this House would be prepared to advocate total repeal of the Corn Law upon this principle. They must both be prepared to advocate it upon the principle that it might be adopted without injury to agriculture; for he was sure that no statesman who had been raised to the position of directing the councils of the country, could possibly adopt so reckless a principle as that the law should be repealed, though ruin might be the result. The question was, then, what were the grounds of their belief that this measure might be adopted without injury to the agricultural interest? It was upon this that the real merits of the question rested; and he could not but come to the conclusion that the present was a 'leap in the dark'; that, notwithstanding all the investigation of this subject, the examination of reports from Mr. Jacob, or returns from our consuls abroad, and the information which had been supplied to this House, the subject was in itself one of such vast extent, and its result so problematical, that it was impossible to come to any other conclusion than that it was a hazardous and perilous experiment, the results of which must be necessarily unknown. If such a great customer as England went into the market, how many quarters of the world would corn come from that had never yet supplied us with any? There was Spain, for instance, the agriculture of which had of late years partaken of that depression which, in consequence of the unfortunate state of affairs there, had become general; but it was most probable that, if Spain again enjoyed a settled government, there would be a very great importation of wheat from that country. Then there was all that portion of the north of Africa which once supplied the Roman empire with grain. He had great hesitation in mentioning any personal observation of his own; but he could not help stating the result of some inquiries which he made when at Hamburgh in 1843. He took a good deal of trouble in inquiring into this subject among merchants on whose information he thought he might rely; and they assured him that it was perfectly practicable to purchase a very large quantity—indeed any quantity—of wheat at 36*s.* a quarter. He also made particular inquiries respecting the amount of freight, having observed that in all the returns of Mr. Jacob and others the freight was generally estimated at about 4*s.* or 5*s.* a quarter; and he was assured that from the port of Hamburgh at that time, when there was a great competition going on between the shipping of the State of Hamburgh, Denmark, and Hanover, it was possible to send corn to London or Hull in the Dutch galliots at so low a rate as 1*s.* per quarter. Now these facts he gave merely as the result of the information he acquired on the spot. He would not undertake to guarantee their accuracy; but he believed them to be correct; and if they should be borne out, he believed that a much greater depression in the price of corn would take place in this country in consequence of the right hon. Baronet's measure, than had ever yet been experienced. The right hon. Gentleman said he considered the state of Ireland as the primary cause at least of the sudden resolution he had come to with respect to the Corn Law. The state of Ireland was one which he was not disposed to treat with anything that approached to levity. He was too well acquainted with that country not to be aware of the appalling consequences which would flow from a great failure in the potato crop; and he was perfectly ready to admit that there was no practicable measure which ought not to be adopted to alleviate or guard against such a calamity; but he could not understand

why a calamity which, however fearful, must be of a temporary nature, should be made the ground for passing such a measure as that now under consideration. He did not think, even if the consequences which the right hon. Baronet apprehended were inevitable, that an entire change in the system of Corn Law would necessarily follow any precautionary measures that might be taken. He did not consider that the present state of Ireland afforded a justification for any permanent alteration of the law; on the contrary, he was sure that the general state of Ireland was the strongest argument in favour of the maintenance of the present Corn Law. Every argument by which the Corn Law was defended applied with added force to Ireland. Ireland was a country purely agricultural. It was a country, the vast population of which—a denser population in proportion to the square mile than the population of this country—was entirely dependent upon agriculture. The trade in agricultural produce between England and Ireland was one of the great links and bonds of union between the two countries. There were two links and bonds of union; one was the trade in agricultural produce, the other the Protestant Church of Ireland. They were going to destroy the one: let them take care that they defended the other. The right hon. Baronet based the adoption of his measure upon his experience of the last three years. He was sure, however, that public opinion, and that posterity, whose suffrages the right hon. Gentleman was so nobly desirous of obtaining, would consider that there was another cause which had been in operation in England for some years past, which had the most powerful effect in producing this result. He thought that to the organisation, the efforts, and the funds of the Anti-Corn-Law League, the public would be induced to ascribe in a great measure the commercial revolution which this House was now called upon to sanction. During the last twenty years that was the second of those associations—the second of those great joint-stock companies in agitation, which had produced such important effects on the policy and destiny of this country. Let them read the history of the first, and then solve him this problem: how many more of those associations would it take to crush the independence of Parliament—to subvert the stability of the Government, or to effect the dismemberment of the Empire? That was the evil which some day or other, by some Minister or other, must be grappled with. It was a system which could not long co-exist with stable, regular government—which in its nature must be destructive of the independence and utility of representative government. He was opposed to this measure, then, because he believed it a dangerous experiment on the resources of the country; he was opposed to it doubly because he believed it had been very much brought about through the influence of that association which he considered every lover of order and regular government was bound to oppose. He did not oppose it upon any ground of what was called mere class interest, nor because he thought it a question of rent, or that the rents of landlords were particularly concerned in it; but he opposed it because he was convinced that if they made a mistake in this matter—if the right hon. Gentleman's calculations should prove erroneous, the result of that mistake would not be a sacrifice of the interests of a class, but the destruction of the prosperity of the Empire.

Mr. A. J. B. HOPE wished to say a few words upon the measure, not in reference to its being a question of the Corn Laws, or a question of free trade; but simply on the ground of whether or not the present Parliament was morally, as well as legally, capable of dealing with it. Under what circumstances had the present Parliament been elected five years ago? The right hon. Baronet had been at that period—in the year 1841—at the "head of Her Majesty's Opposition." He had led the struggle against free trade, rightly or wrongly, at the time when the noble Lord the Member for London (Lord J. Russell), as a last effort of the Whig Government (that Government which had then ruled England since 1830, and had in the natural course of events become effete), had brought forward his free-trade scheme; the right hon. Baronet had opposed him on that occasion, and compelled the noble Lord to appeal to the country. The country had responded to that appeal, and returned them, the House of Commons of 1841, as a protectionist Parliament to crush free trade; and the House of Commons had chosen the right hon. Baronet as the leader of that party. And now, in 1846, they were called upon to pass the very same measure—nay, a far stronger and more sweeping measure than that which their constituents had returned them to oppose and put down. Rightly or wrongly, that had taken place; and by

what measure of political expediency could such a change be justified? To be sure, the right hon. Baronet had been elected by the party as their leader in 1841, and he still continued their leader; but he should remember that neither he himself, nor the noble Member for London, nor the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden), nor any other leader of party, was such by divine hereditary right. He was leader of his party simply and solely as being in the minds of his followers the best exponent of their principles; and if his principles and theirs remained the same, he retained his position; if not, it should be no matter of surprise to the right hon. Baronet, or any other, if the members of his party, finding that their leader had deserted the principles on which they had elected him, should retire from his side and choose each his own leader, or take each a line for himself; and let him remember that the evils, all the misgovernment that must result from such a course, would fall upon himself, and not upon those who had been compelled to trust solely to themselves. That was the real state of the case. The right hon. Baronet now came forward in this Parliament, and with the same glowing eloquence, to advocate those very principles which he had trampled under foot in the last Parliament, in 1841, and in the early debates in the same year in the present Parliament. On last Tuesday week, they had been all present there to know the changes to be proposed by the right hon. Baronet, and what the grounds were which led him to those changes. And what had been the argument by which the right hon. Baronet supported his measures of free trade? It was forsooth, that it was consistent with the principles of true Conservative policy. But what did the right hon. Baronet mean by true Conservative policy? Toryism was a tangible thing; Whiggism was a tangible thing; protection was a tangible thing; free trade was a tangible thing: in all those things there was meaning; but what meaning in the world was there in that strange new word, "Conservatism"—that word which had arisen since 1832, at the time when the old Tory party, split up in divisions, had found a difficulty in coming together under one banner? What was this "Conservatism," which was not animated by the spirit of Toryism, nor of Whiggism—no, but by "true Conservative policy?" It was no more than an empty sound—the last departing ghost of Conservatism, which should long ago have been sent to the catacombe of all departed hoaxes. So stood the case with the Conservative Government—that Government which was composed of men from the broken ranks of the old Tory party, and which now came down to the House, in 1846, to advocate utter free trade, because it was consistent with "the principles of true Conservative government." That might be true Conservative policy, but it was a policy which would not conserve the affections of the right hon. Baronet's own party. There was a Minister once very powerful; it was in the days before the House of Commons had become what it now was; when the power of England was exercised by the Crown, and that Minister swayed the Crown as the Ministers in these days swayed Parliament. One little expression which had escaped that Minister had caused his fall. The power of Wolsey had not long survived his expresssion, *Ego et rex meus;* and the right hon. Baronet's influence, perhaps, might not long survive the use of his favourite phrase, "I and my party." The hon. Gentlemen who had been elected to seats in that House on strong protectionist principles were so much expected to follow their leader, that they had been brought down to the House of Commons, as they had been on last Tuesday week, without even the common courtesy being accorded them which they had received formerly, when measures of comparatively minor importance were to be proposed—namely, of giving them some slight intimation of what the measure was that was to be brought under the consideration of Parliament. It was not so long since such courtesy had been observed towards them. He himself was one of those Members who, in 1841, had known something about what was to take place before the Address. But a total change in the whole commercial system of the Empire, as though it was a mere bubble—a mere fleabite—was brought forward without their having received any previous notice or inkling of what they were to expect. Such was true Conservative policy—policy which would have been rather strange in the new Parliament, but which was now carried safely into execution. Thus this great revolution in that commercial system by which England had been sustained, was to be brought forward in the last moment of an almost effete Parliament, which had existed now nearly five years. Perhaps that revolution, affecting as it would the entire modern state of society,

the commerce, trade, and manufactures, by which not only the greatness of England but of the whole world was acquired, would be more serious in its results than any revolution of the Constitution or of the Government could be. A revolution of that sort was to be brought forward in that way, and hon. Members were expected under such circumstances to support it. Notwithstanding the philosophical views which had been put forward in his speech by the hon. Member for Bridport (Mr. B. Cochrane), he must say, that protectionist policy had been the policy of England for centuries. If the measure now under consideration were to pass that House, it would be sent in the natural process of legislation to the House of Lords; and the question for its adoption in that august assemblage would be put by the Lord Chancellor from the Woolsack—yes, from the Woolsack, that mute but immemorial emblem of the attachment to England to the principle of protection. The Woolsack had been placed in the House of Lords in the reign of Edward III., and there it had remained for ages to remind the Members of that branch of the Legislature of the highest and most important of their functions, and to serve as a memento (so to speak) of what description of policy the people of England were desirous that they, their hereditary Legislators, should pursue. But whatever difference of opinion might exist as to the strange change which had come over the policy of our rulers in the 19th century, he could not understand how there could be any diversity of sentiment with respect to this fact, that those who were the great movers in these strange revolutions had pursued towards their party, and indeed he would say towards the House in general, a rather contemptuous and most assuredly unprecedented course. This measure of 1846 formed a just crowning point to that strange heterogenous mass of legislation, the Maynooth grant, the Irish Colleges, and those other measures which constituted the political life of the Parliament of 1841. But the right hon. Baronet might say there was no other course open to him. He thought, however, that the right hon. Baronet might have said, as upon former occasions, that there were three courses open to him. The right hon. Baronet might have treated the question as he had done; he might have dissolved Parliament; or, better than either, he might have come boldly forward at the time the noble Member for London had, with great gallantry, advocated free trade. If the right hon. Baronet had then come forward, and said to the noble Lord, "For a long time I have supported protection, you have supported free trade. I am satisfied now, that all my life I was wrong; therefore, to you who are right, I give up the Government of the country, and tender you my warmest and hearty support." That would have been honest, and whatever their private views might have been, they could not have helped praising such a course as heroic and magnanimous on the part of the right hon. Baronet, and he would have won golden opinions for himself even on that (the Ministerial) side. But still he would have done better if he had let hon. Gentleman opposite, as he had a right to do, bring forward those measures, and reap the honour and credit of their own policy. Hon. Gentlemen on the other side had a right to demand that those measures of legislation, which for many years they had toiled after and spent their lives in procuring, should be passed by them; that they should have the honour and credit of carrying them. That would have been but common justice to them. But another course had been adopted by the Conservative protectionist Government of 1841. A free trade was proposed by them, and was to be carried through the House by the cry of cheap bread. His vote therefore would be given as a protest against a course of policy which could add no lustre to the very best system of abstract legislation.

Viscount SANDON felt himself called upon to explain and vindicate the course which he was about to take with reference to the question then before the House. He was in a position different from that of any Member who had yet spoken. He disapproved of the measure proposed, and yet he intended to support it by his vote. He could not honestly say that he was convinced by the arguments and facts which had convinced the right hon. Baronet, and induced him to give up his former opinions. The basis of induction seemed to him too narrow for so broad a superstructure. The facts themselves were not very conclusive: they were, many of them, to be explained by special causes peculiar to themselves, independent of general principles; and whatever they were, he could not think that, if all the *à priori* arguments of political economists, and all the inductions from previous observations, had for thirty years failed to make an impression on the

mind of the right hon. Baronet, the narrow experience of the last three years, on a few small experiments, was a very intelligible or satisfactory ground for so sudden and so great a change of opinion. He was not one who had ever rested his defence of the Corn Laws, nor did he think it had ever been mainly rested, upon the hypothesis that the rate of wages depended upon the price of corn; and, therefore, any facts which tended to contradict it could not weigh much with him in his opinion upon the general question. He did not mean to assert, that the price of all labour depended upon the price of corn; still less that it varied up and down in exact accordance with all its fluctuations. In skilled labour, no doubt, that element entered but slightly into the question of wages: the small number in possession of it facilitated combination, and limited the supply, so that wages were artificially kept up; but it would be difficult to persuade him, that in unskilled labour, whether at the hand-loom or in the field, where competition was unlimited, and wages were driven down to the lowest point, the price of subsistence did not enter most largely into the question of wages; and he would appeal to any man, whether, in his own experience, such was not the case. The correspondence was not always immediate, nor mathematically exact; but such a sympathy, as it were, did exist, and in the long run, in such cases, was sure to show itself. Why, every political economist acknowledged it, and every fact proved it. Why, else, were the wages of the worst-paid labourers in England, higher than those of the same labourers upon the Continent? There could not be less competition for their services than there was in some parts of England; and yet Mr. Senior, in his Report to the Poor Law Commissioners, acknowledged most distinctly, and proved, the fact. The proportion between the demand and supply of any kind of labour, might for a time obstruct the operation of that tendency, and in skilled labour, as he said before, its effect was not so visible; but no experience of three years could justify the denial of its existence. While, however, he felt it was impossible to admit the validity of the right hon. Baronet's observations upon that point, as warranting his change of opinion, he fairly acknowledged that he thought some of his friends, in their defence of the Corn Laws, had rested too much upon it. It was good, as diminishing the importance to the labourer of cheaper bread; it was not good, as proving that it would be an evil to him. Again, he could not think with the right hon. Baronet, that the high prices of certain articles, on the importation of which the duties had been lowered in the last three years, were so conclusive an evidence of the effect of relaxation of protection, as he had stated it, sufficient to create a revolution in opinions so long matured. They had undoubtedly been contemporaneous with certain relaxations in the Tariff; but he could not think that those relaxations were the main causes of high price, or that they were evidence of the permanent effect. There were many circumstances to explain the fact. The very ebbs and flows to which, as it were by a law, all mercantile prosperity seemed to be subject, were almost sufficient of themselves. Good harvests, return of confidence, accumulation of capital, railroad enterprise, occurred at once to the mind of every man. These were all special causes, giving an unusual value to all kinds of produce, raising the price of every article, and defeating the natural effect of increased competition. Surely the right hon. Baronet did not mean to assert, that the natural effect of competition—the permanent result of increased supply, was to raise prices? Was this the new reading of political economy? Was it the object of the clamourer upon the Corn Laws to have a smaller rather than a bigger loaf? He could not, therefore, pretend conversion; he could not close his eyes to the fact, that in removing all protection from domestic agriculture, they were about to make a most hazardous, an almost unprecedented experiment. Let them look to commercial Holland, to monarchical France and Belgium, with their mixed interests, or to republican America, they would find no country which had yet been rash enough to leave her agriculture exposed to the unmitigated effect of occasional glut from foreign import, from which it especially suffered, and from which it had so little power to protect itself. He was now thinking of the case of the tenant-farmer. Although he was not indifferent to the importance of the considerations which had been so well pressed upon the House by the hon. Baronet who sat near him, to the importance of the expenditure of 45,000,000*l.*, which might be considered as constituting the landed rental of the country, and which might be seriously affected by the removal of all protection; yet still, as far as the landlords themselves were concerned,

he would not plead for them. They might suffer some inconvenience; but they would survive the change, and their property might ultimately recover, and rapidly improve its value. But the farmer was in a situation peculiarly exposed and helpless. Whether he had a lease or not, he was practically nearly as much tied to the soil. He had buried his capital in the soil, or he could not remove it without tremendous sacrifice. Unlike the merchant or the manufacturer, he could not divert, or expand, or contract his operations. He was, as it were, tied to the stake, and must abide the issue of evils, without the power of adapting himself to their changing character. He must raise in the main the same kind of products, and in the same quantity, only striving to increase it. He could not cut off in one year a part of his expenses, or limit his cultivation. He must cultivate the same fields, and always as well as he could. If he neglected any part of his farm, the burden would be heavier upon him the following year. He had no option. From the nature of his occupation, he was not in general the man to have any money lying idle, available for his outgoings, independent of the produce of his farm. What then was his case under a depreciation of the price of his produce? Landlords might help him. They might, in their liberality, make an abatement or an adjustment; but did not every one know, that in spite of such liberality (and liberality of course was not universal) such abatements always limped slowly after the necessity for them? Was not that the case in all engagements of a similar nature? On the first application did not the landlord doubt and hesitate, not knowing how much of lowered prices was to be attributed to permanent causes, and how much to such fluctuations as every tenant was expected to be prepared for? When he did make abatements, was he not apt to say, "I cannot bear the whole loss, though I will share it with you?" and meanwhile, was not the farmer's capital wasting away, and did he not attempt to economize by spending less in labour, less in every way upon his farm; and did not every such economy diminish his chance of recovering his condition; and had he before him, in many cases, any other prospect under falling prices than total ruin? In this process the labourer goes along with him; for, with declining prosperity, unfortunately, the number of labourers is generally the first article to be diminished, though with accelerated ruin to the employer. Such, whatever the theory might be—however it might appear plausible enough to assert in abstract reasoning, that the question of a Corn Law was a matter of no interest to the farmer, but only concerned the landlord—such was the practical effect. It might be theoretically true: it was practically false. All experience proved it. The decline of prices since the war had left the landlords comparatively untouched: he did not believe many estates had changed hands in consequence; but farmer after farmer, generation after generation of tenants, had given way before it, and the labouring classes had largely suffered with them. This had been the practical result of declining prices before, and such must it be again. Seeing, then, that the reasons which had been assigned by his right hon. Friend for this great change in his long-nurtured opinions, had failed to convince him, and that he yet retained his opinions in favour of protection to agriculture, and looked upon the experiment of a perfectly open trade in corn as in itself inexpedient, and full of hazard, he had yet to explain why still he was prepared to give his vote in favour of the measure proposed. He would frankly state his reason. He felt that the country must be governed; he saw that all those who could govern it, had abandoned the principle of protection; he felt that the principle of protection, however sound, as he thought it, and defensible by argument, yet could not stand when unsupported by the authority of great names, and by those who were looked to as the representatives of enlightened opinion; and, under these circumstances, he could not blind himself to the fact, that the principle of protection was doomed—that, in fact, repeal of the Corn Laws was what the French call "*un fait accompli*," and the only question was one of time, of a few days, a few weeks, or possibly a few months—months of bitterness, of struggle, of convulsion, of danger, and injury to every interest, including that which protection is designed specially to serve. Why, is it not the fact, that every man living, who has ever sat in Her Majesty's Councils, with the exception of two noble Dukes, has either sanctioned or acquiesced in the abandonment of the protective system? Was it possible, then, for any reasonable man to doubt of its fate? Let Gentlemen, let his Friends, argue, and vote, and agitate, as they pleased, the conclusion must be the same. The only question was, in fact, when and how it was to

be? Such being his view of the facts, he could not hesitate as to his course. He believed the experiment to be hazardous: he believed it could not be tried without severe distress to many; but being fully convinced, under the circumstances, it was inevitable, he believed acquiescence in it at once to be the least evil of the two. While he thought it perilous, while he found it was unprecedented, he did not look upon it, he must admit, with all the apprehensions, with all the despondence, which possessed some of his hon. Friends. He was not of those who anticipated that millions of acres would be thrown out of cultivation, or millions of labourers out of employment. He had seen the price of corn decline, since the war, from 110*s.* and 120*s.* to 55*s.* He remembered when it was held by high authorities that little short of the former prices would keep land in cultivation; and he now heard the latter, a reduction of full 50 per cent. considered a tolerably remunerating price. He had not seen the ultimate effect of this large reduction of price in diminished or deteriorated cultivation. On the contrary, large inclosures had, during that period, taken place: the land was now, on the whole, better cultivated than it was, and more hands employed. He could not, therefore, share in all the apprehensions of his hon. Friends as to the result of a further reduction of some 10*s.* or 12*s.*, which would be the probable average result of the measure now before them. With these feelings, therefore, not sharing in all the apprehensions of the opponents of the measure, though not convinced of its safety and expedience by the arguments and three years' experience of the right hon. Baronet; conceiving that it was only a question of time, and that a short one, and that further delay and struggle would only be injurious to every interest that he was bound to protect, without altering the result; having great confidence in the elasticity of British industry and capital under every trial; and feeling that the question of protection, being one not of faith or morals, was one in which he was perfectly at liberty to take any course which he thought most expedient for the welfare of the country, under its varying circumstances—he should feel no hesitation, though he had not disguised his reluctance, in giving his vote in favour of the measure proposed.

Lord J. RUSSELL: I believe, Sir, that, I am the first Member who has risen on this side of the House on the important —the very important—question now before us; and, while I shall give my vote on the same side with the noble Lord who has just addressed the House, I can say that I shall do it with better heart and hope than that noble Lord has exhibited as to the task we are about to undertake. I will not attempt to underrate the importance of this question. Hon. Gentlemen whom we have heard speak on the opposite side of the House, and who object to the propositions made to us by Her Majesty's Ministers, seem to consider that they have said what is quite conclusive when they say that for centuries a system of protection has been the system of legislation adopted in our public policy. I am not at all terrified, Sir, by that annunciation. We know that for centuries the system of religious disabilities was the system of legislation adopted in this country; we know that for centuries the want of security for the liberty of the person was the legislative system adopted in this country; but happily we have lived to acknowledge the great benefits which have flowed from the destruction of those systems; and I hope that we are now at the commencement of the destruction of another system which has been most injurious to the country. We shall hereafter all feel proud that we have participated in laying the foundation for a new and a better order of things. It appears, Sir, that the question with respect to the Corn Laws, which in former years was almost exclusively confined to the particular question of corn, has of late—especially in meetings and discussions in the country—been widened to the whole principle of protection; and those who defend the present Corn Laws, and who wish to maintain them —avoiding all appearance of selfishness or legislation for a particular class—have said that they wish all native industry to be protected; but the hon. Gentleman who seconded the Amendment this night, seemed to confess, at least he was sensible, that protection to all native industry was a mere plausible word—that it rested on no solid foundation, because, he asked, how could protection be found for many great interests in the country? The great cotton manufactures of this country, the great woollen manufactures, the great linen manufactures of this country, are sent abroad to compete in markets at a great distance from us: they are sent to the markets of America and of Asia, to compete with the fabrics of other countries; we therefore want no protection for them in Sussex or in

Lincolnshire. If that be the case, and if the great branches of our industry want no protection, they are not benefited by the trifling and the trumpery protection which remains on your Statute Book, and they are not benefited by that protection which seems to give to one particular class of industry an advantage. The great general argument of all writers on political economy with regard to protection, applies to each particular industry. In the first place, it interferes with the due current of trade on behalf of one particular class; in the next place, it lays a tax upon the rest of the community for the benefit of that particular class; and in the third place, this particular object is not attained, and the very classes it seeks to benefit lose by this pretended protection. Indeed, these propositions have now been so clearly proved, that they have become axioms in political science. I was induced the other day, in consequence of the praise bestowed upon it by the hon. Member for Norfolk, to read a pamphlet, in answer to another pamphlet, published by Messrs. Malton and Trimmer, written by Mr. Halesworth, who says that every quarter of corn is raised 17*s.* in price by the protection afforded by the Corn Laws. If this be so —though I believe it in fact to be a great exaggeration—if corn and bread be thus raised in price, an enormous amount of protection is given to agriculture. Suppose the fact were so, if 20,000,000 quarters were raised 17*s.* a quarter, a tax of no less than 17,000,000*l.* a year would be paid by the people of this country for this protection to agriculture. I believe that this statement is much exaggerated, but still the great principle is correct: it does raise the price; and while we give protection, as it is afforded by the present law, we give, what I will not call an advantage, but an apparent advantage, to a particular class, which is injurious to the whole community. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Hampshire, who seconded the Amendment in terms which were so temperate and so unobjectionable, stated that a difference ought to be made between those in whose occupations more manual labour is employed, and those in whose occupations there is less manual labour, and in which machinery is more employed. Now I do not see the foundation for any such distinction. Suppose 5,000,000 are employed in a trade in which machinery is used, and others are employed in a trade where there is little machinery, that is not a good ground why one should receive the protection of the Legislature, and why the other should not enjoy that protection. Well, then, Sir, if it be the case that the system of protection be in itself an evil, as the great writers have laid it down, the question comes to be, "What course ought we to take to get rid of this protection?" And here I must say, that the writers who have written most ably on this subject—I refer to Adam Smith and to Ricardo, and to Lord Grenville and Mr. Huskisson as statesmen—all speak of using caution; but they have not pointed out in what way we are to get rid of this protection, how we are to eradicate this vice from our system. On this subject they have thrown little light, possibly because there was little which a theoretical writer could throw upon it. I confess that I agree with the noble Lord who last spoke, that a great transition cannot be made without incurring the risk at least of considerable suffering. Circumstances may be so prosperous that we may avoid it; but I do not wish to risk the prediction that if we get rid of protection, though we promote eventually the welfare of the country, we shall not for a time incur a considerable sacrifice. I think that this admission has been made by all who have thought upon the subject. Some may speak of a panic; others, as landlords, of the difficulties of making arrangements as far as different classes are concerned; but all will admit that there is a material, a considerable, danger of some loss of capital, and of some diminution of profits. I come then to the mode in which the right hon. Gentleman opposite, the First Minister of the Crown, proposes to treat this question. I agree with the noble Lord, that I do not think he has laid his grounds broadly and extensively enough in point of time. It appears to me that there are measures to which the right hon. Gentleman might have alluded. He could have had no difficulty in referring to them, because I believe he was a Member of the Cabinet by which those measures were introduced. I allude to the measures of Mr. Huskisson, which in many cases substituted a moderate for a high duty, and did away generally with prohibitory duties. I will not make any statement of figures, but I will say, generally, that I think the duty on silk having been made a moderate duty from prohibition in 1825 or 1826, in 1837 and 1838 we found the import of raw silk had increased more than 100 per cent.; with respect to French gloves, with

regard to which there was a great alarm, the increase in the articles of hides and skins necessary to make gloves, was 57 per cent. in the course of about ten years after those duties were reduced; with regard to wool, the reduction to 1*d.* a pound produced a great increase in the price of the article, an article the produce of the British agriculturists; the French wool being introduced at that low duty, the exports increased to a very great extent; and I think the tod of wool rose from 25*s.* to nearly 40*s.* I think these are instances among many that may be quoted from the history of the last and the present centuries, showing the benefit of at least reducing duties. But, then, the right hon. Gentleman has proposed a plan which goes beyond the mere reduction of duties to a moderate amount, thereby increasing the import; he has proposed, with regard to the duties on corn, that after three years they shall altogether cease. Now, I am of opinion, that if the right hon. Gentleman had undertaken this task in 1842 in a different spirit, and had made a far greater reduction in the duties on corn than he then made, it would have been better for the agriculturists as a body, and better for the country in general; but as matters stand now, I am ready to say, seeing the contest that is going on—seeing the struggle that would go on if you attempted any intermediate step either of a sliding scale over a few shillings or a small fixed duty—I am prepared to say, as indeed I have already said in public, that I think the abolition of the duty is the most expedient course for Government to propose to Parliament. Considering the plan of the right hon. Gentleman as a great measure, as a measure that is to lay the foundation of a completely new principle with regard to our commercial legislation, that principle being neither to foster one trade nor the other, neither to attempt to promote agriculture nor manufactures, but to leave them "to flourish or to fade" according to the energies and skill of the people of this country; and believing that is the sound principle, I am prepared to give every support I can to the plan brought forward by the right hon. Gentleman. But, Sir, I think it incumbent upon me to say, with regard to the mode in which the right hon. Gentleman has introduced it, that of having a new system of Corn Duties for three years, that the opinion I had formed in December has been more and more strengthened by everything I have heard since the right hon. Gentleman made his plan public in this House. I hear from all parts, from Devonshire, from Roxburghshire, from various parts of Scotland, and from various of the midland counties of England, that the farmers who have been consulted upon this subject say everywhere—"If we are to have the system of free trade instead of the system of protection, let us know at once what that system is to be; we would rather have the duties immediately repealed, than take the chance of this new Corn Law which you propose, as breaking our fall, and as intended for our benefit." Sir, I think there is great reason in that. In the first place, I think the tenant-farmer will be better able to arrange with his landlord as to the particular sums that he will have to pay, if he knows at once what the state of the law is, and has not to wait till February, 1849, to take the chance of what may then happen. In the next place, I think there is some danger to the farmer—but it is according, of course, to what the seasons may be—that in 1848, if the price is low, there may be a very considerable accumulation of corn; and that a glut which would not happen if trade were then free, may happen if there is a sudden reduction from 10*s.* to 1*s.* in the beginning of 1849, not owing to the price of corn, but owing to your previous legislation. In the next place, I have always thought, that if there be a danger of competition to the English farmer, the danger will be far greater after the lapse of two or three years, than it is at the present moment. It so happens, that, in the present year, we know, owing to the bad harvest in some of the countries in Europe, there is very little stock of corn remaining at Dantzic or Hamburgh, or those parts of the Continent from which corn is usually introduced; and there is no reason to suppose that there is any great stock in the United States: there is, therefore, no apprehension on the part of the farmer. I think the way in which the immediate prospect of the duty being reduced to 4*s.* has been encountered in the market—for, I believe, the price of corn has generally rather risen than otherwise—is a proof that there is no great danger at the present moment. If there be any danger to encounter, it is when, both on the Continent of Europe and in the United States, preparations are made, the ground has been cultivated, and the seed has been sown, with a view to send in large supplies to the English market, and then at that

very moment the duty is to cease. It is as if the right hon. Gentleman were to furnish the farmer with a great coat, provided he wore it only in the summer, and were to make it a condition that he should take it off when Christmas arrived. The provision, I think, may expose the agricultural interest of this country to a danger which it would not otherwise encounter. But I would put it to the right hon. Baronet whether he will not reconsider that part of his plan? The right hon. Baronet has frequently alleged, when bringing forward subjects of this importance, that it was almost impossible to know the exact effect of the duties proposed, until they had been by himself stated in this House, and the opinions of those who would be most affected by them taken and collected. It does appear to me, as far as I have heard, that with respect to this, which the right hon. Baronet intended, no doubt, as an advantage to the cultivator of the soil, the general opinion is, that it would not be that advantage. I hope, therefore, that the right hon. Gentleman will reconsider this part of his plan. But, as I have already said, I wish the plan of the right hon. Gentleman to succeed; I wish to see his measure with respect to corn successful in this and the other House of Parliament; and no vote of mine shall tend in the least to endanger a measure of such a character. If, therefore, when we come into Committee, the right hon. Gentleman tells me that he has considered the representations made from various parts of the country, but that, upon the whole, he considers the delay of three years, and the duty to be imposed in the mean time, an essential part of his plan, I, for my part, shall go out with the right hon. Gentleman upon it. I have stated thus much with regard to the plan as it affects corn; it is not necessary that I should say much with regard to other parts of the plan which the right hon. Gentleman explained to the House. With regard to sugar, it will not be necessary for me at this time to make any observation whatever. With regard to manufactures, I should say, generally, that if the corn duties are to be abolished, the taking away protection from manufactures, unless where there is an impost which gives a considerable revenue, is a clear duty to the agricultural body. I think you are bound to show them that you abandon protection altogether as a principle—as a principle vicious in itself, and injurious to the country—and not that you are about to subject them to any peculiar experiment, which is so hazardous that you will not subject other parties to the same experiment. I own I doubt if, in some other instances, the right hon. Gentleman has acted upon that principle; but, however, that will be matter of detail when we come to consider the various duties. But there is another part of the subject which I certainly cannot approach with any great satisfaction, from the difficulty of treating it. The right hon. Gentleman has proposed to give certain relief with respect to local burdens, and especially with respect to the expense of prisons and of prosecutions. I think those amendments in the law are, upon their own grounds, just; I think they are improvements in the existing law. I did not hear the right hon. Gentleman say that they were offered as compensation; and I do not think any compensation of that kind could properly be offered. But I confess I do not feel sure, that with respect to the general burdens of the country, the landed interest, the owners and the occupiers of land, may not have more than the share that properly belongs to them. It is a point upon which I feel difficulty; because, although my opinion certainly was, that they were thus unduly burdened, I found that whenever a proposition was made—when my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield (Mr. Ward), making a statement adverse to that opinion, asked for a Committee, none were so ready as the agricultural Gentlemen to oppose inquiry, and to declare that they would not submit the question to investigation. An hon. Gentleman, the Member for Radnorshire, gave us rather a long comparison or analogy; he said, that if the shoemakers of this metropolis were ordered alone to pay the police rate, they might well state that they could not sell their shoes so cheap as other persons could sell the different articles they produced; and they might complain of the unjust burdens imposed upon them, and that might be so; but if the shoemakers happened to form a majority in this House, and if the shoemakers were to say, "We will not have this subject inquired into, we will not let you know whether we do pay more than you or not for the police," I own I should very much suspect those shoemakers of thinking that their case would not prove so right when it came to be sifted as it was plausible in appearance. But there is another difficulty in this question. When, about a year and a half or two years ago, there was a very large sur-

plus of about 3,500,000*l.* in the Exchequer (or indeed more, for there were increased estimates afterwards), I suggested that it might be worth the while of the agricultural interest, if they could at all perceive what was coming on, to have their case as to burdens investigated, with a view to obtaining relief with regard to some taxes—I mentioned the malt tax, for instance, which I thought pressed heavily upon them—but they would not hear of such a proposition; they said, "Protection must be kept just as it is." When the right hon. Baronet came to distribute those 3,500,000*l.*, he distributed them no doubt advantageously to many interests of the country, very advantageously to the trade of the country, but with no peculiar regard to the agricultural interest; and I for one felt no sympathy for them. I could not vote that they ought to have even the 250,000*l.* which the hon. Member for Somersetshire proposed they should have granted to them, because I thought, as long as they clung to this protection, and insisted upon what I considered an unfair advantage against their fellow countrymen, they had no claim for having a peculiar relaxation of burdens. But, as the right hon. Baronet now proposes the matter, he really would have little more surplus to give. I do not know that he has fairly so much as the 500,000*l.* or 600,000*l.* which he estimates. I confess freely that if I had had to propose a scheme upon the subject, it might have differed from the right hon. Baronet's scheme, but that there would not have been any more very material relief. For the right hon. Baronet has this alternative—to take what there is of surplus in the Exchequer, to endeavour to lay burdens more equally which are now unequal, or to propose an increase of taxation for the purpose of taking off burdens which press more severely on the landed interest. Now, that increase of taxation, I think, would be a most inexpedient course; I believe it would expose the landed interest to very great unpopularity; I believe nothing they could gain in point of money would be equal to the odium which would attach to them, if it was to be said that the taxes of the country were to be increased in order to provide a compensation for the abolition of the Corn Laws. For these reasons, therefore, I say at once that I concur in the general scheme of the right hon. Gentleman. I wish that the repeal had been immediate instead of deferred; but in the present state of affairs, seeing the attachment that there is on the part of a large portion of the community to this protective system, I think the advantage so great of getting rid of that system, as respects corn, in three years, and of almost every other protection giving way immediately afterwards, unless it be really some case which will bear argument, that I am unwilling to disturb in any way the settlement of this question. But I cannot forbear taking notice of one remark, which fell from the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Lascelles) with regard to these plans proposed by the First Minister of the Crown. The hon. Member said, that without meaning anything (I am sure he did not) discourteous to those who sit here, he thought the right hon. Gentleman more able to carry these measures successfully than we were likely to be. Now, that is an observation which compels me to state that I do think that measures of the same kind would have been successfully carried, if the right hon. Gentleman and those who sit with him had supported plans brought forward by those who are his political opponents in the manner in which we support plans brought forward by ours. This matter of free trade and protection, as it had been very justly stated, I think, by the hon. Member himself, is not properly one of those questions which come within the domain of party. When Mr. Huskisson brought forward his plan, many of those who sat on his own side of the House were opposed to him; many of us who sat opposite to him gave him our support. Plans of moderating duties, and introducing a tendency towards free trade, are not properly Whig plans; they are not exclusively Tory plans. The right hon. Gentleman opposite, when Home Secretary, as I have always understood, and as he himself has stated, acted most cordially with Mr. Huskisson in the promotion of those measures. But when the Whig party were in power, and Lord Althorp attempted a reduction of the timber duties, he was met by a party opposition. In 1830, when we all of us who were then in office, two Secretaries of State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Presidents of the Board of Trade and the Board of Control, voted with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) for going into Committee to consider the Corn Laws, with a view, as we all stated, of proposing a moderate duty, we were met by a party opposition, which prevented us going into Committee. In 1841, when we came forward as a Government to pro-

pose reductions with regard to corn, and sugar, and timber, we were met by a united party, containing many Members who represented commercial places—many who, I believe, if they had not been bound by a party tie, would have acted according to their convictions that it would be for the benefit of their constituents that more free principles of commerce should be adopted. The hon. Member for Wakefield is an hon. exception to that remark. He voted, I believe—he frequently has—with my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, when he proposed those Motions for the repeal of the Corn Laws, of which he is now about to see the triumph; and I congratulate my hon. Friend on that prospect. But I think it is to be lamented that the right hon. Gentleman opposite, and those who with him had learned sound principles of commercial freedom; who had been colleagues and friends of Mr. Huskisson; who could not be ignorant of those principles by which the trade of nations ought to be governed; who did not share in those principles which I think totally unsound and erroneous which have been expressed by the Opposition to-night—it is to be lamented that they did unite in party votes in order to defeat plans founded on those sound principles. My opinion is, that if that had not been the ground of opposition, if the Government of that day had been defeated in any other manner, and those measures had been allowed to pass, much of the sufferings of 1842 and 1843 would have been avoided; the right hon. Gentleman would have avoided for himself much of the invective and the reproach now cast upon him, as having betrayed somebody or other when he has been, if not consistent with the course which he took in 1841, true to the interests of his country. But, Sir, when the hon. Gentleman the Member for Wakefield tells me that the right hon. Gentleman opposite will be more successful in carrying these plans than we should, I say again that it is by our aid, and in consequence of the conduct that we shall pursue, that the measure will attain its success. I think myself bound to say so in justice to those who act with me. And if the right hon. Gentleman has the glory of adopting plans of commercial freedom which will benefit his country, which will enable the poor man to get a better reward for his labour, which will increase the demand for all the productions of this country, and which, after these questions are settled, will, I hope, open the way to the moral improvement of the people of this country, hitherto prevented by their want of adequate means of comfort—if the right hon. Gentleman has the glory of carrying a measure fraught with such large and beneficial results, let ours be the solid satisfaction that, out of office, we have associated together for the purpose of aiding and assisting the triumph of the Minister of the Crown.

Sir R. H. INGLIS said, that nine gentlemen in succession had risen on the same side of the House, and almost in the same quarter of it; and notwithstanding the kindliness of his noble Friend's nature (Lord J. Russell) who had just sat down, he probably felt some pleasure at seeing them firing into each other's vessels, with an occasional broadside into their Admiral. Till the noble Lord rose, he could not help asking himself, what had become of all the Members on the opposite side? Where was the wild Quixotism of the hon. Member for Durham (Mr. Bright); the erratic chivalry of the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden); and the calmer gallantry of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers)? He was, perhaps, reclining under his laurels; but why was it, he asked, that it had been left exclusively to hon. Members sitting on that side of the House, to take so prominent a part in the present debate? His noble Friend had at length come to the rescue. He hoped that he should not be tempted, in the course of the few observations he should make, to say anything unkind, or provoke any angry feeling in a debate which, up to the present time, had been conducted with a singular disregard of all party or personal acrimony; but yet he could not help repeating that he thought his noble Friend must have felt some pleasure when he found a party so divided against itself. The noble Lord began by announcing three distinct propositions, on which he said all political economists were agreed; the noble Lord did no more than merely enunciate them—he trusted to the ready faith of the House in receiving them on his authority—he did not attempt, in his speech, to prove them—he left them to stand on their own intrinsic merit and truth: they were not, he repeated, enforced by any argument of the noble Lord. The noble Lord, also, referred to the statement made in the able, eloquent, and temperate speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire (Sir W. Heathcote). The noble Lord referred to that speech indeed, but did not attempt to controvert it. He alluded to

that part of his hon. Friend's speech on the special disadvantages of the employment of capital in agricultural pursuits as compared with its employment in manufactures—the one, dependent on men and seasons: the other, on a steam-engine. Now, the noble Lord had left this statement untouched, denying only the claims of agricultural labour to any special consideration. It was, therefore, opinion against opinion. He had heard the speech of his noble Friend the Member for Liverpool—he had heard his noble Friend say he would vote against the Amendment; but he should certainly never have been able to discover a clue, from his speech, as to his vote, if he had not announced the side upon which he intended to give his vote. For, in fact, that declaration was a direct contradiction to the whole of his speech. He had not heard a more conclusive speech in favour of his (Sir R. Inglis's) views, and could hardly wish a single word or sentiment altered in it, but that one declaration of the vote. He had stated, that he would not promote any bad feeling; he would keep his word, and would enter upon that more quiet part of the subject to which, with the permission of the House, he would draw their attention for a few minutes. His view of the principle upon which a Legislature should proceed in treating such subjects as these, was to endeavour to procure the best supply of the food of man at the most moderate and equable price. He repeated the expression, most equable as well as moderate. It should not be forgotten in all these discussions, that the general system of protection had prevailed, and was recognised by Parliament for a generation. Now, the question he would put was, whether there were any country in Europe in which production had been maintained at prices so nearly equable? He would not deny, that in this country there had been great variation in the price of production; but what he said was, that, proportionately to other countries, the variations in the price of food had been considerably less in this. It ought to be remembered that the supply of corn in a great measure depended on the providential arrangement of the seasons, in wet weather and in dry, not exclusively on the force of a steam-engine; there must therefore be necessarily a great variation in the produce, and a great variation in the price. The proposition which he wished to set forth was, that in no country in Europe had the variation in the price of produce been so small. The largest variation that occurred in the price of produce in England had been 140 per cent.—a very large amount he admitted; but the amount was the largest taken on an average of twenty-four years between 1815 and 1838, as he found it in a Paper laid before that House in 1840. But what was the variation in other countries? Take two great sea-ports, Bourdeaux and Rotterdam for instance:—In Bourdeaux, the variation was nearly twice as great as in England; in Bourdeaux, the variation of price, instead of 140 per cent., as in England, was 260; and in Rotterdam, more than double that of England, or 295 per cent. But what had been the variations in producing countries? In Prussia Proper, it was 212 per cent.; in Brandenburgh, 248; in Saxony, 269; in Westphalia, 334, more than double the variation of England; and in the Rhenish provinces also the variation was double that of England. Surely, when called upon to disturb a system by which corn was obtained at such comparatively equable prices, the advocates of the change ought to have a basis of calculation more solid and extensive than the calculation of the three last years. They should advance some argument much more conclusive than the apprehension of the famine now alleged to be impending, grievous as that apprehension might be, if there were a prospect of its being realized. The famine, or apprehension of it, was, however, limited to an insufficient supply of one article of food, and which article of food could, if not supplied from other parts of the world, be very well dispensed with by the substitution of another and higher description of product. He remembered some years ago reading a very able article in a paper called the *Scotsman*, respecting the evil of bringing up the people of any country to live on the cheapest possible food, because in that case, the writer argued, the population had nothing on which they could fall back. He admitted that having brought up the people of Ireland—4,000,000 of them at least—on potatoes, they could not supply them with anything cheaper as the fruit of their own labour. But he thought that such a crisis—a great crisis, as the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government called it—might be met by extraordinary energy and exertion of the supreme Government. It was not by the introduction of potatoes they could be relieved; because, as the right hon. Baronet himself said, in the remarkable speech which he delivered to the

House, all the countries which produced potatoes had prohibited their exportation. In Sweden, Belgium, and Holland, the distress was so great, that no potatoes could be obtained from those places. But did that apply to the inferior kinds of grain, or did it apply to the superior kinds? He thought the right hon. Baronet had told them that both Turkey and Egypt had refused to permit any exportation of the higher kinds of grain from those countries. But the Irish people might have the supply they wanted by the importation of the inferior kinds of grain, and which would yet be superior to their ordinary food. It has been said that a sort of remuneration or compensation, to the amount of some 500,000*l.*, in about twenty items, was to be made to the agricultural interest. Now, without denying the expediency of some of the changes thus proposed, he felt that they were altogether inadequate as compensations for the protection to be withdrawn. On every account, and irrespective of the present question, he (Sir R. Inglis) would have been much better pleased had the scheme given to the landed interest the real compensation, of shifting a portion, perhaps 2,000,000*l.* of the poor rates, which now pressed so heavily on that interest, on the Consolidated Fund. That would have gone far to realize the original intention of the Legislature, that men should contribute to the poor rates according to their ability. At present, the larger proportion of the income of the country did not contribute to the payment of the poor rates. All lands were taxed to a very considerable amount indeed. He had been told that if he agreed to a Committee to inquire into the burdens upon land, the contrary would be proved; but it was a well-known fact, beyond all dispute, that the landed property did contribute largely to the poor, and that funded property did not pay one sixpence towards the poor rates. And if that were so, would not the transfer of the payment of a certain proportion of the poor's rates to the the Consolidated Fund be an equitable transfer? But when they talked of the landed proprietors as exclusively interested in the change now proposed, he could not help adverting to another interest which appeared to have been disregarded in the proposal now under the consideration of the House. He meant the interest of the owners of rent-charge in lieu of tithe, which had been established, much against his wishes, some years ago. He would admit, for the sake of argument, though he denied it in fact, that the amount of home produce might in future be the same under the new system as it was under the existing protections; and he would take, for the sake of illustration only, such quantities and such prices as might most eaily be calculated in debate. Take, for example, fifty quarters of corn at 50*s.*—that gave at that moment 125*l.* a-year. If the proposal were carried into effect—if the price of corn should fall—here again he took an imaginary case—to 25*s.*, it was obvious that the amount of tithe-rent paid in that case would be just half, or 75*l.* In reference to the solemn contract made six or seven years ago, not a single word had been said, though the injustice of now altering the law was apparent. He was quite aware that it would be easy to prove from *Hansard*, or from country newspapers, instances of inconsistency in those who now advocated the measure; but that would be utterly superfluous, since many advocates of the measure admitted in the strongest terms such inconsistency—"*Habemus confitentes reos.*" He would not reproach his noble Friend (Lord John Russell) with having changed the opinions which he entertained in his youth. He changed those opinions in his manhood; and he was sure that no one who knew anything of the character of his noble Friend, would accuse him of having been influenced in such changes by any low or sordid motives. He thought it as needless to say that he did not accuse his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government of being actuated or influenced by any low or sordid motives; he was as convinced as he could be of the principles of any man, that his right hon. Friend had been influenced in his change by motives of the most pure and hon. kind. He said this, not merely from his knowledge of the character of his right hon. Friend, but from what must strike any man who admitted that such changes could not take place without a motive. Any man must see that his right hon. Friend, so far from being influenced by any conceivable motive except that which arose from conviction, had almost every conceivable motive for continuing in the course which he had previously pursued, and from which he had deflected. He was at the head of the largest majority which had sat in that House since 1834. It was a party which, he ventured to say, he might have looked upon with some

satisfaction—a party which certainly looked up to him with entire confidence. He only regretted that that party had not been earlier made acquainted with his right hon. Friend's intentions. He understood the cheer of his hon. and gallant Friend behind him (Col. Sibthorp), and must say, that it was his humble but sincere conviction that nothing but the strongest and most imperious sense of duty could have induced his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government to come forward with the proposition which had now been laid on the Table of the House. He hoped his right hon. Friend would forgive him when he said, that exactly in proportion as they had reposed confidence in his former opinions, they were entitled to discuss his claims to statesmanship in his present conduct. If the proposal which he now advanced were the true proposal—if his right hon. Friend were a great statesman now, all his former proposals must have been invalid, and all his past conduct must be considered unstatesmanlike; and in all his former policy he was insensible to the real wants and necessities of the country. He only expressed his own deliberate convictions when he used this language. He hoped he should not give offence; but it was impossible to give credit to any man for such an entire change of opinion, without in some degree impeaching the correctness and fitness of the right hon. Baronet to guide the destinies of this great country. It was not merely that his conduct to-night was inconsistent with that of preceding years; but the suddenness of the change from one line of conduct to another had been so great and striking, that they could not feel sure but there might be another change. If the noble Lord opposite supported the proposition of the hon. Member for Sheffield on the Irish Church, he well knew that noble Lord would endeavour to carry out that proposal to the full extent which the hon. Member for Sheffield could desire. But if his noble Friend were to say, on the other hand, that he would support the national Church, and a national Church system of education, he had as little doubt, as it was possible for any man to have, that his noble Friend would be induced by no consideration to swerve from that pledge. He felt bound to express his full confidence in the honour and integrity of his noble Friend; more particularly because he knew that some of those with whom he (Sir R. Inglis) generally acted, in and out of this House, regarded the noble Lord as something like an ogre. Some of the party to which he (Sir R. Inglis) belonged, thought there was nothing so bad as might not be apprehended from him. All that he could say was, that he would much rather trust an enemy who told him at once what he meant to do, than—he was afraid he must say—[*a pause*]—he stopped for his own sake [*Laughter*]. He heard that laugh, and well knew with what pleasure hon. Gentlemen opposite must regard the breaking up of the once great and once united party on this side of the House. His hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield had, in the earlier part of the evening, made some observations upon the conduct of an hon. Member on that side of the House, and upon the conduct of hon. Gentlemen opposite, in the justice of which he (Sir R. Inglis) could not concur. If the measure were carried at all, let it be carried by those who were for years its advocates, and not by those who, till the last three months, had been, all their lives, its opponents. His right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) cheered that observation. He understood that cheer. It meant that his right hon. Friend had so wished, and had so desired to act: but had failed, and had accordingly resumed the Government—only when no one else would take it. He (Sir R. H. Inglis) would not admit that there was no other course than that which the Government had adopted. In their sudden change of opinion, principle, and policy, the judgment of the country ought again to be taken. An alteration in the whole system of England, grounded upon an experience of three years, was accompanied by a fatal subversion of confidence in some of its chief public men. The noble Lord's opinions, on the contrary, were at least four years old; in truth, much more, and were known to all men. In 1839, the noble Lord voted for a Committee, and on the 10th of last June he voted on the proposition of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton. At that time he gave all the world reason to believe, that if by any circumstances the destinies of this country were placed in his hands, he would do his utmost to carry out those principles. For his part, he could only deplore the course that had been taken by the Government, and endeavour to give it all the resistance in his power. He asked himself when, and on what ground, and by whom, was the present question brought forward? The answer was—in a time of profound peace and universal prosperity. Look to Ireland—Ireland not as in 1798

with a secret organization of 300,000 armed men ready for rebellion: not as three years since, when overrun with monster-meetings. Look at England—in a state of prosperity unexampled; and advancing in this prosperity under the very system of protection which was repudiated by the authors of the present measure. There never was a year in which every branch of industry flourished so vigorously as in 1845. The old maxim *Quieta non movere* might be paralleled in English, "Let well alone:"—why should we take physic and die? Then again, on what ground was this great change enforced? Why, that in one division of the Empire, there had been a great failure in one main article of food, the potato crop of Ireland. But, in the first place, all men admitted that other crops had been abundant there and here; and, as to this particular crop, in a document laid on the Table of the House, which he now took up in his hand, it appeared, that there was in the district to which the return applied, a large increase in the crop of last year over the preceding year. In the whole of the district, consisting of twelve parishes, the produce in each parish was, as contrasted with that of the preceding year, as follows: In one parish, 16 bushels this year instead of 10; in another, 18 instead of 10; 14 instead of 10; 14 instead of 10; 18 instead of 10; 18 instead of 10; 14 instead of 10; 14 instead of 10; and 14 instead of 10. In every instance, in short, the produce had been much greater this year than last. A private account which he had received, confirmed the conclusion. While, then, he admitted that the destruction by disease was indeed great; he concluded, that the produce had been so large, that the proportion of loss to the average crop was far less than at first sight appeared. Influenced by these and by the considerations he had mentioned, under all the circumstances of the case, and considering when and on what grounds the measure was brought forward, in which there was certainly no just reason for the change, he announced his determination of voting now as he had hitherto done, against the principle of this measure, and would give his cordial support to the Amendment of his hon. Friend.

Major FITZMAURICE said, that under the tree of British protection every species of industry had flourished in this country, and the result of free trade would be, that it would throw a large mass of land out of cultivation in exact proportion to the quantity of foreign corn imported from abroad, which was grown there at a cheaper rate than in this country. Taking the case of Poland, for instance, he had the authority of a person who had resided there for twelve years, for saying that wheat grown in Poland might be landed in the London market under 30*s.* a quarter. They were told that America would afford a great market for British manufacturers, and he sincerely hoped it would prove so; but suppose America did not choose to take British manufactures in exchange for corn, but should insist on having gold, in what a condition would this country be then placed! He would ask the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government whether he did not know that nearly three-fourths of the whole shipping which came into the port of London laden with corn during the last quarter, returned in ballast, or, in other words, they returned with gold for their corn? The right hon. Baronet took great credit to himself for the measure which he had brought forward; but that merit was entirely due to the Members for Stockport and Wolverhampton, and their friends. Though no one was more opposed than himself to the policy of the hon. Member for Stockport, yet no man was more willing to give credit where it was due; and if the proposed measure proved satisfactory to the country, he thought there was no situation which the country could offer too high for the services of that hon. Member. In what manner was the Motion of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton and the speech of the hon. Member for Stockport met, in 1844, by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government? That right hon. Baronet then said that it might be very pleasing to indulge in the theories of modern philosophy and political economy; but when they had endangered and destroyed the happiness of a nation, they had then obtained but a very sorry return for their pains. He, indeed, feared that they now would have but a sorry return. It appeared to him that a most beneficial change might have been made in the Corn Law by the trifling alteration of taking the averages by weight instead of by measure. They would then have had bread and wheat of corresponding prices; whereas now the case was quite the reverse. The effect of this alteration, too, would have been to destroy the great monopolists in Mark-lane. Nothing could be worse than these eternal changes: they not only interfered with the regular process

of farming, but also with the regulation of labour throughout the year. How could they expect the farmer to lay out his capital in cultivation and improvement, when they were changing the law every six months? What would be the use for him to go down to Buckinghamshire, and to tell the farmers, "The alteration in the Corn Law will not of itself ruin you, nor the changes in the Tariff will not in themselves destroy you," —if there should be a variety of measures all tending to and uniting in one point of ruin to the farmer? What mattered it to a man whether he was stung to death by a thousand needles, or killed by one thrust of a sword. And, for his part, he preferred the bold, manly system of the hon. Member for Stockport, to the mincemeat, ladylike interference of the right hon. Baronet. When the farmer found himself deserted by those who once pretended to be his friends—when he found himself handed over to the tender mercies of the hon. Gentleman on the Opposition side by the right hon. Baronet, who was placed in the situation in which he now stood mainly by the farmer's exertions, could they feel surprised that under these circumstances the farmer should turn round, and in the bitterness of his disappointment exclaim :—

"Blow, blow, thou wintry wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude?"

Mr. S. HERBERT: If I were called upon to cite authority in confirmation of my opinions, and in favour of the expediency and justice of the course which Her Majesty's Ministers are prepared to adopt, I think, of all the speeches I have heard this evening, I should select the two last speeches of my two hon. Friends as those which furnish the strongest arguments against the conclusions which they announce as their convictions, and against the course which they intend to take on the present question. An attempt has been made to show, in a speech mixed up with much hostile feeling and prejudice against the conduct of Her Majesty's Government, that there are no circumstances existing in this country which call for legislative interference—still less that there are grounds for interference to stop the usual course of law—that nothing has occurred either in this country or in Ireland which could have justified all parties in stepping out of their previous course, and announcing a great change of opinions—a change of opinions forced upon them by different circumstances, which no man by possibility could have contemplated. I wish I could agree with my hon. Friend that there was not in Ireland any such cause for interference—that there was no cause for anxiety, none to justify any extreme step taken by the Government, none to justify Ministers in proposing to change the laws which regulate the importation of food. The hon. Gentleman tells us—and he selects one electoral district in illustration—that there was a larger crop than the average sowed in Ireland; and therefore the loss was not so great as the increase which the unusual fertility of the fields produced. [A Voice: Those are potatoes.] Yes, but potatoes are a prime article of food in Ireland; and it is impossible to disconnect the failure of the potato crop from this question of food. It is not necessary for me to expatiate upon the misery of a population depending upon that kind of food exclusively. We have this year a signal instance of the state to which a population may be reduced when it depends for subsistence on food which is not susceptible of keeping from one harvest to another; but is it the case, that there is this year an unusual fertility in Ireland? The Commissioners, referring to the opinion that upon the whole the potato crop this year was a very large one, said—

"We regret to add, that we have been unable to obtain any proof of this; on the contrary, we have seen that the crop was small, and we have it in evidence that it is below the average; but we have also seen it to be heavy, and we therefore conclude that it may, perhaps, be an average crop."

From first to last I must say, that the reports which the Government has received from the constabulary and from the stipendiary magistrates were most creditable to their judgment in this respect; that as they never gave in to the panic at first, they never gave in to the fool's paradise at last. They never gave in to the statement that there were no sound potatoes left. They never misinformed the Government in that respect, and they never in that reaction of the public mind—to which perhaps they are more subject in Ireland than in other parts of the Empire—fled to the other extreme and told the Government that no danger was to be apprehended. So far as the failure of the crop in Ireland is concerned, I wish I stood here in the position of being obliged to state that the reports by which we have been guided are fallacious, our judgment erroneous, our precautions unnecessary. On the contrary, I fear that any inquiry you may institute will give a fearful and

melancholy corroboration of the facts on which we have acted, and that our judgment will be proved true in a manner and to an extent which none, I am sure, will regret more sincerely than the very Gentlemen who now deny the fact. But the evil exists here also. In England and in Scotland, potatoes are a staple article of food. In the west of England, their use has increased almost as much as in Ireland. No man has put more strongly than the noble Lord the Member for London, the paradoxes of a scarcity of food with cheapness, owing to the inferiority of what is produced. Potatoes, in the face of scarcity, are sold cheap, the holders fearing their loss through decay. So the averages of corn were depressed last season by the inferior quality of the grain. I do not stand on a point of consistency when I frankly avow that I think the law of 1842 has failed; that the first time it was tested by adverse circumstances it failed, and signally failed. We have dear bread and low averages—dear bread and a high duty. We have bread as dear as in 1839 under the old law, the duty higher than under the old law. The prices of wheat in November ranged as high as in 1839; but the mass of the wheat being of inferior quality, sold at the lower prices, and depressed the averages. Bad wheat does not make bad bread, but less bread; you must buy more wheat to get farina to make the same quantity of bread. But we had bread at 9½*d.* and 10*d.*; a fixed duty of 14*s.* For short harvests the law of 1842 would have worked; for it was a mitigation of the principle of protection. Hon. Gentlemen forget that the whole object of the Corn Law enacted in 1815 was to effect the transition from the high prices of war to the low prices of peace. How did every statesman who ever touched the question deal with it? Was it to increase protection? No; but to diminish it; to carry out the principle in the same spirit in which it originated. Seeing the existing state of matters, seeing the law had failed of its purpose —that food was deficient in quantity and inferior in quality — that the deficiency was common to the whole of Europe —that in consequence of that deficiency other countries had opened their ports for importations of grain—while Turkey, Egypt, and others, had closed theirs against exportations of grain—that other countries on which we had depended for supplies had become competitors against us for the purchase of grain; under these circumstances I thought, with others in Her Majesty's Government, that it was necessary to take steps for meeting the difficulties under which the country was labouring. I am glad to hear from the hon. Member for Somerset that he was not one who was adverse to opening the ports —that he was not prepared to oppose such a measure if its necessity were absolutely shown. I regret, even now, that the course we then contemplated was not adopted. I think that in cases of public emergency, promptness and vigour ought to be exercised. I thought, under these circumstances, that if the Government at once took upon itself the responsibility of these measures, the battle would have been half won. I knew this, moreover, and say what Gentlemen may in this House, they will not persuade me to the contrary—that the gentry and the agriculturists of England were not men to set up their pecuniary or other interests in opposition to the public advantage. My noble Friend the Member for Liverpool (to whose speech, though it has been claimed by the hon. Member for the University of Oxford, I also may lay claim, because I think it proves the accuracy of our anticipations of the results of free trade), expressed with some earnestness his regret that this measure should have been proposed by the Government of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel). I have no hesitation in saying, that I held the same opinion, and that I strongly advocated the necessity of this measure being entrusted to other hands than ours. The noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) has spoken in terms of some bitterness of past differences on this subject. But those differences did not relate to the question of protection or no protection, but to the relative advantages of a fixed duty and a sliding scale. The noble Lord, too, is a recent convert to entire free trade; but I think that, as latterly he has, from his party connexions, been so much mixed up with the cause, he had a better right than we had to bring forward this measure, and I, for one, should have been heartily glad if he had undertaken its conduct. I regretted to hear the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) use an expression—whether inadvertently or not I am uncertain—intimating that if we had offered to support him, as he is about to support us, he should have been able to carry this measure. I observed that the expression to which I refer was received with a cheer by hon. Gentle-

man on the other side, as if they thought there was a wide difference between the conduct of the two great parties in this House on the question now under discussion; and I must say that I think no distinction could be made more unfair than that which is thus attempted to be drawn. The noble Lord said, in allusion to the speech of the hon. Member for Wakefield, who questioned the power of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) to carry this measure, that if we had offered him the same support as he is prepared to give us, he should have been as well able as we are to pass this proposition. [Lord J. Russell: I alluded to the year 1841, not to anything that has occurred recently.] Then I have misunderstood the noble Lord; for I must still maintain, that in 1841 there was no question between us, but only a question of degree; but I must say, that the support we volunteered to him in December last was spontaneously and cordially tendered. We stated to the noble Lord the grounds on which we felt that a private concert between the leaders of parties would have been resented by the House of Commons as an infringement of their right of free deliberation. The noble Lord admitted the truth and soundness of those arguments; but I will say, for my right hon. Friend and myself, that no support could have been more frankly offered, or would have been more cordially and heartily given, than that which we tendered to him. But I return, Sir, to the subject. When I hear assertions as to the effect the measure suggested by Her Majesty's Government is to produce upon the agricultural interest in this country, I wish hon. Members would show us how we are to be ruined by a more extended commerce, and tell us from what countries the abundant supplies of wheat they anticipate are to be imported. I heard an hon. Gentleman say, a short time since, that wheat could be imported into London from Poland at 30*s.* per quarter. Such a thing certainly has not yet happened. If you go to Dantzic you may buy Polish wheat; but I doubt whether you would get it at anything like so cheap a rate as the hon. Member anticipates. I am afraid, if he enters into any contract of that description, that ruin will fall upon himself rather than upon the agricultural interest. In Dantzic, which is practically the cheapest market in Europe, the prices of wheat are now as high as they are in London; and whenever there is, in that place, the slightest demand for wheat, the price rises rapidly. And when the hon. Member for the University of Oxford talks of the fluctuations of price, it must be remembered that in these producing countries, the fluctuations in price arise from two different causes: from the nature of their harvests, and from our demand. One place from which a very large supply of corn is expected, which might, as I once supposed, interfere materially with our own produce, is Odessa. I have made inquiries as to the state of the markets there, and I find that the average price in 1838, 1839, and 1840, (for it is fallacious to quote single years,) was 34*s.* a quarter: that was with a demand for wheat here. At Malta, which is supplied with Odessa wheat, the average price over a large number of years is about 32*s.* or 33*s.*; and the cost of the transit of that wheat to this country would bring it to a price at which it could scarcely enter into competition with our own, especially when you recollect how inferior it is in quality. I confess, with the noble Lord who last spoke, that I do not think the transition can be made without risk or sacrifice. Take what course you may, if you wish to get rid of protection, and to take that which I believe is the course you ought to take for the country's welfare, you must incur some temporary sacrifice. This is an admission made by all parties who have considered the subject. But do not overrate the amount. You will find it impossible that any greatly increased quantity of corn can be brought here from Dantzic or Odessa to compete successfully with our home produce; and those are the two great continental ports from which importations are expected. Spain, where corn can be produced cheaper perhaps than in any other, receives large importations from America. From there, again, great apprehensions are also entertained of extensive importations of corn; but how does the case stand? I find that in Ohio, the largest and most fertile State in the Union, the population increases much more rapidly than the production. The population has increased from 45,000 in 1800, to nearly 2,000,000 at the present time. For the last fifty years, the total exports of flour and wheat from the United States, have been gradually diminishing; for the last four years, the diminution has been still greater. Gentlemen opposite have given up the clap-trap cry of cheap bread; and on our side, it is time that we should allay the apprehensions which exist on this subject; that we should

prevent the agriculturists of this country from being scared from their propriety by alarms which are founded in delusion. I found, in considering the present circumstances of the country, that a state of things existed which promised a succession of high prices for one, two, or more years. I saw that a great change of opinion had taken place in the public mind on this question. I found that a great change had taken place even in the opinions of the agriculturists themselves; and that among the tenant-farmers there was an impression, which I have heard them express in strong language, that this is a landlord's question. An hon. Gentleman who has spoken to-night, has said he considers that any depreciation in the value of produce must be divided between the landlords and the tenants—that it must affect the rent of the one as well as the profits of the other. But is that the case? What is rent, but the difference between the net return and the net profit of the farmer? It is the surplus after the farm is reimbursed. That, at any rate, is the opinion of the tenants; they say that they have taken leases on what was called Act of Parliament prices, but that, somehow or other, the market price was below the Act of Parliament price, and the landlord got the benefit of the difference. Sir, I felt that if these opinions were prevalent among farmers holding large quantities of land, it would be impossible to maintain the existing system. The supporters of that system said, "Let us be quit of that which is so uncertain—which depends on Parliamentary majorities, the caprices of Members of Parliament, the turns of public affairs; let us trust to our own skill, capital, and industry, and then we shall have nothing to complain of. At all events, it will be better than a state of uncertainty." These were the opinions of the occupying tenants; and as to the feelings of the labourers, I appeal to every agricultural Gentleman whether they are firm supporters of the Corn Laws. Sir, a meeting took place at a village called Goatacre, in my county—a meeting which has been alluded to in a different sense by different parties in this House. Now, I am not prepared to deny—indeed, I think on the face of the resolutions agreed to at that meeting, it is obvious—that those resolutions were not drawn up by working men, that the proceedings were preorganized and contrived by others. But this I am bound to state, that the statements of those working men as to the difficulties they labour under were correct. I live in the midst of a population as to whom I scarcely know how they exist. That is a question which has disturbed more men's minds than mine. Sir, hon. Gentlemen, my Colleagues in the representation of my county, have thought, and thought painfully, on these things. The labourers say, "We don't care what change you make, we defy you to make our condition worse." I am not one of those who would say, as hon. Gentlemen opposite would, that this state of things is the effect of the protective system. But, at the same time, although that system may not have been the cause of these things, it does not follow that its removal may not help to better them. I will read to the House a letter I received to-day from a man of great intelligence, who farms upon what is called "the system of high farming," who manures his land highly, and is thoroughly master of the subject:—

"I am quite sure that if the Wiltshire hills were farmed as they ought to be, and as under the proposed measure I hope they will be, you would not find a labourer unemployed in the whole county. Light-land farmers attach too much importance to their wheat-crops; they grow corn on too large a proportion of their farm, and do not consume half enough on their land by stock—viz., they ought to produce more beef, mutton, and pork, and less grain. I can, Sir, give you an example how far good and high farming permanently improves the soil. There was a common field in Berkshire which was occupied by several persons, one of whom was a baker, who had three acres in different parts of the field. He used to fatten a great many pigs, which made much very rich manure; this he applied very liberally to his land; and although it is ten years since the field was divided, yet the baker's acres may be discovered at this day by the most casual observer, from their increased and surpassing fertility—thus proving not only the advantages of this high system of cultivation, but the necessity of a long tenure to enable the farmer to obtain such a full return as his energy and capital so well merit. By compliance with the conditions I have above mentioned, the landlords' rentals will not be decreased, but their tenants will be prosperous and their labourers employed at good wages. Another argument which is used by the opponents of free trade, is, 'the reduction which it will cause in the wages of the agricultural labourer'—founding this opinion on the fallacy that the price of labour varies with the price of wheat. Now, my own experience fully controverts this statement; for, since I have been in Wiltshire, I have sold wheat as high as 78*s.* and as low as 40*s.* per quarter, and have only paid two rates of wages, i. e. 9*s.* and 8*s.* per week, a variation by no means commensurate with that of the proposed standard; and I cannot but think, if the condition I have spoken of before, were complied with that the increased demand for labour arising from the safer employment of more capital on our farms, and the general better cultivation of them, will more than counterbalance the slight difference in wages which

so large a variation in the price of wheat may have caused."

There has been much misapprehension on this subject of wages, because hon. Gentlemen will draw deductions from what falls under their own eye, rather than from a general view. It is incontestable, in the manufacturing districts, and we have lately had additional proofs of it, that so far from wages fluctuating with the price of food, the price of food rises while wages fall. In some parts of the agricultural districts, again, when a fall in the price of wheat takes place, wages will fall, though not to the same extent; and when the price of wheat rises, wages do not rise in proportion. Well, Sir, seeing these changes of opinion among the very class who profess to support those laws, I first thought that they were not maintainable; but, still more, I considered that these laws ought not to be maintained, because, being no longer willingly accepted by the community, they became in their eyes most unjust. That this was a time for making the change with the least prospect of the infliction of suffering, was an additional reason why it should take place. But I confess other reasons more cogent than these, than a desire for the extension of commerce, or the temporary necessity for meeting scarcity; I felt that it was more consistent with honour—["Oh, oh!"] Hon. Gentlemen may have a difference of opinion from myself on these subjects. I was speaking not of the honour of the Government, nor of my own personal honour. I hold that, as far as my personal honour is concerned, I did that which was consistent with the conduct of an honest man. After much doubt on this question, reluctantly, slowly, I changed my opinions. I did not make light of party engagements; I saw these evils; I knew of the intimidation that would arise; I knew of the threats that would be held out; of the punishment by which I should be visited by my constituents, because I had chosen, in the exercise of my duty, to follow the dictates of my conscience, rather than of personal interest. I speak in no tone of bravado; for if such a punishment were to be inflicted on me, it would be to me a matter of the deepest mortification; but I counted the cost of these things. I knew that my duty to the country required that I should not stand here as the delegate of a mere local interest, to make a scramble with other delegates to get as much as I could from the general pickings; I thought that such a position it would be disgraceful in me to hold, and one which my constituents never dreamt of imposing on me, and, thereupon I acted as I have done. So much, Sir, for my personal honour. The honour I spoke of was that of the landed interest only. I say, now is the time to concede with honour, when there is no appearance that your concession is extorted by violence. There is no danger from agitation at your doors. Arguments you have had which I confess have great weight in my mind; but the amount of the agitation of the League, led, though it has been, by men of the greatest ability, has been much overrated. Like the armies we see paraded on the stage, the same men come round and round many times over. The agitation of the League has not been that of masses, such as we have seen in the case of former agitations. It has been an agitation not of force, but of reason. If you do not now yield to reason, to that agitation, some day, force may be added; and then you will yield, not as now, with honour, but with loss of station, influence, and character. I now come to a ground I wish to touch upon, and which I frankly avow to you is with me a stronger motive than all why we should set ourselves free from the continuance of this law. The public mind is not in the state it was in in 1815. At that time these matters were little understood; the heads of the party who brought forward this question, Lord Liverpool and the men of that time were in advance of the public mind, and they brought it forward as an exception to a recognised principle. It has been so dealt with ever since. That is now acknowledged. In 1841, when the noble Lord opposite brought forward his Budget, I frankly avowed my complete adhesion to the principles of free trade; but I objected to the mode of their application to corn. I objected to the machinery, as well as the rapidity with which they would be applied; but the soundness of the principles we never denied. But now the public mind is enlarged upon the subject. You have men of all classes, of all shades, and of all colours, and engaged in all domestic pursuits, beginning to think that one part of the community has a benefit over another, and at the expense of another. Then, if we are to stand upon such ground as that, we stand upon a mine, upon a rotten footing, and we cannot maintain it. Talk of party—the hon. Gentleman says that the party is broken up. I do not admit that this party, Conservative party or Tory party—

call it by what name you will—is bound together by no greater object than a Customs' duty upon the importation of foreign corn. Look at the history of these laws. Was it party intention? We have had Corn Laws ever since the reign of Charles II.; and since that time they have been constantly changed, and constantly suspended. I could show you cases when the duty was no higher than 6*d.* a quarter—when the laws were suspended, and the ports were opened, was party therefore in each case weakened, broken up, dissolved? But it has been said, that Corn Laws are part of our Constitution. Sir, if I am right in thinking that they impose a burden on one part of the community for the benefit of another, then I say they are contrary to the whole spirit of our Constitution. I am not one of those who wish to see the Constitution of this country rendered more democratic than it is. I cannot think that the public mind wishes it to be more democratic than it is. I think late events have rather shown that the mantles of despotic kings who disgraced the world, have fallen upon democratic rather than upon temperate and mixed Governments. I have no faith in Governments guided by uncontrolled popular passions. I have no wish to see the aristocratic element weakened in our Constitution; and it is upon that account I say, do not peril it on a question in which your motives may be impugned, when once you are convinced, as I am, that these laws are not for the good of the community. I say that, with that opinion, no earthly power can induce me to rise from this bench to defend them. They may say that the country Gentlemen are a party having great power and influence; that that power and influence have been given to us to be exercised for the public good; but that we have used it for the increase of our incomes. I do not say that these laws were passed for that purpose, I am sure that they were not; but at the same time I cannot deny that they have had that effect· and I should sit with shame upon ..y face were I to hear such an accusation made, and were I unable to refute it. Hon. Members must recollect that great changes have taken place in the last fifty years in the social constitution of this country; that the manufacturing power has increased to an enormous degree. You may dislike the effect of it—you may think it con gregates together great masses of men—that you have less security for their morality and welfare; but depend upon it, it is a power you cannot check nor control; it has become a permanent element in our society; it has great wealth, and offers great employment; it is a source of that commerce which has maintained our colonial empire, and given us the dominion we possess throughout the world; it is now, as it has always been, the great source of our maritime power, and you must also recollect that if you intend to maintain this great Empire, and think, as I do, that it is possible to carry its free institutions, and temperate liberties, and reformed faith to other parts of the globe, it is by these humble means, these manufactures, these woollens, and linens, that under Providence you are enabled to do it; it is by extending your commerce that you are able to penetrate into every part of the world, to civilize, and to teach. You must recollect, too, that men who give you these benefits—who contribute so largely to our prosperity—are entitled also to a full share of the advantages of the State. My noble Friend who opened the discussion at the meeting of Parliament, in one of those eloquent and graceful speeches so characteristic of him, pointed out how much it is the interest of commerce and manufacture to have peace, security, and the maintenance of those institutions, by which they are most likely to be secured. You must recollect that those gentlemen whose pursuits depend so much upon public tranquillity, are the best auxiliaries you can have for maintaining those things under which this Empire has so long flourished—those institutions which do not depend upon Customs' duties, which have grown with the growth of this country, which require to be constantly amended, but with a tender and reverential hand. I wish to see the two interests of agriculture and manufacture united. If they have been separated, it has been by the fault of legislation, it is not a fault of their own; but I wish to see those two knitted together. I believe the proposals of the Government have a tendency to cement the two. I believe that the proposals of the Government, being involved in a large and comprehensive scheme, will produce a change in such a way as to produce little loss or suffering to the interests affected: and I believe further, that when the country shall have maturely considered them, and when the constituencies more exclusively agricultural shall have calmly considered them, they will think that those

proposals offer a means of throwing off that protection which they no longer require; that they have the means of attaching to themselves large masses of men who have been taught by circumstances to be almost hostile to them; that they may follow their pursuits without doubt and uncertainty, and the loss attendant upon them from which they have hitherto suffered. I should lament, moreover, to see the class to which you and I belong; to which by birth, by habit, by prejudice if you will, I am attached; and which I consider to have one of the noblest spheres of usefulness that exists in private life in any country in the world—I mean the class of English country gentlemen—debased in any way, or lose its natural influence; and I know no way in which that influence can be so weakened as by your maintenance of a law, from which, in my conscience, I believe you derive no advantage whatsoever, but which I consider to be unjust and impolitic, and which must lower you in public estimation, by giving to those who watch your proceedings false, but, I admit, most injurious notions as to the motives by which you are actuated. You have now an opportunity of repairing the greatest error ever committed by any body of men. I may assert that the gentry of this country have been distinguished from those of all other countries in the world as having never been the advocates of disgraceful immunities. While other aristocracies have been the sycophants of courts, they have borne the chief burdens of the State; they have given to the State their service and their blood and their treasure, and from them have sprung some of the most eminent men in the field, the Church, and the walks of science, this country has ever produced. I am anxious that this character should be maintained. Hon. Gentlemen laughed just now; but I do think that the law of 1815 was in principle, at any rate, a great error. It may have been necessary as an expedient: as such only was it enacted. We offer you the means of repairing it. I trust you will accept it. For myself, my own mind has for some time been firmly made up to it. I believe the measures we propose will be for the interest of all classes of the community. I have confidence in their success in this House—I have confidence in the results that will follow from them; and I leave them in your hands, with the earnest and sincere prayer to you that without previous bias, without party or resentful feeling, and believing that they are for the interest of yourselves as well as of the community at large, you will not acquit the Government, but sanction the measures which they have proposed to you for the public good, and for the public good alone.

Debate adjourned. House adjourned at one o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, February 10, 1846.

Minutes.] Public Bills.—*Reported.* Turnpike Roads (Scotland).

Petitions Presented. By Lord Kinnard, and Lord Stafford, from Inhabitants of Alloa and Wigtown, for Repeal of Corn and Provision Laws.—From Landowners and others of Chesham, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.—By Duke of Buckingham, from Landowners, Farmers, and others interested in the well-being of Agriculture, of Metham, and several other places, for Protection to the Agricultural Interest.—By Lord Campbell, from Merchants and Manufacturers of Birmingham, for Repeal of Duty on Copper Ore.—By Lord Kinnaird, from Linen Manufacturers of Letham and Forfar, for Repeal of Import Duties.—From the Presbytery of Kelso, against the present practice of granting Spirit Licenses to Toll House Keepers in Scotland.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA.

Lord KINNAIRD, after presenting a petition from Forfarshire, for a total repeal of all laws imposing duties on human food, said, that in pursuance of the Notice he had given some days ago, he would take that opportunity of putting a question, and stating his reasons for putting that question, to the noble Lord the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He would first state his reasons for putting the question, and then the question itself. Looking to Her Majesty's Speech, he found it stated that the interference which we had made in the Rio de la Plata, was on account of our trade being interrupted, and acts of barbarity had been committed there which were unknown to the hostilities of civilized nations—at all events, he would say, greater barbarities than could be committed in any of the civilized states of Europe. Although he admitted it was questionable how far any country was justified in interfering in the domestic government or policy of any other State; yet as circumstances had arisen to call for our interference, and as that interference had been against a comparatively weak State—he conceived that Her Majesty's Government might be justified in using all peaceable means in remonstrating against the commission of such cruelties as those which had taken place not long since in Lithuania, which was part of the dominions of a monarch with whom

we were upon peaceable terms. The accounts were almost incredible, and therefore he had great hesitation in believing them; but he had taken pains to come at the truth of the facts, and considering the state of that country, he thought that he had good authority for stating that the accounts were but too true; and all he had previously heard upon the subject had been literally confirmed. He would not embarass their Lordships by detailing all the cruelties inflicted upon the nuns at Lithuania, whose only offence was that they belonged to the Roman Catholic religion. It appeared that about the year 1837, the principal of the Roman Catholic Church in that district was converted to the Russian or Greek faith. He had obtained unlimited power from the Emperor of Russia to exert every influence he could for the conversion of the Roman Catholics of his district, and he used that influence with the utmost tyranny. He first turned his attention to the sisterhood of St. Basil, at Minsk, and having brought over the confessor to his views, he endeavoured by every promise of worldly advantage, to persuade the nuns to adopt his views, and recant their own long-cherished religion. That they declined to do, and having persisted in their refusal, the bishop gave them three months to consider; but before the expiration of that time he came with a body of soldiers, and brought them off to a neighbouring town, where they were treated with the utmost severity, and subjected to the most degrading and servile punishments. They experienced, for two years, the greatest persecution, and they were then again removed, in consequence of an apprehension that the people of the town in which they were, who witnessed and knew of the barbarities practised, might unite together in rescuing the nuns. In the locality to which they were next brought, they were obliged to associate with the very dregs of society, and to labour in such a manner as no female could or ought endure; so excessive was their toil that eight of them very soon died, and three perished, by the ground falling on them whilst excavating; three of them, after suffering so much that it was scarcely credible it could be endured by females, escaped. Not only were they made to suffer this treatment, but they were subjected to other treatment which he would not name. Salted herrings were given them in order to increase their thirst, and then they were denied a cup of cold water; they were fed on alternate days upon bread and water, and when reduced to the lowest state, they were brought before "the minister of religion" (so called), by whose orders they got fifty lashes upon refusing to be converted, or to adopt his "religious" views. A similar number of lashes were given to them twice a week, to prevent their wounds from healing; and they were not only subjected to every species of suffering themselves, but, to aggravate their torments, they were obliged to be present at the punishment inflicted on others. They were made to witness an act of barbarity which never had been exceeded in the worst days of the Roman empire, in the persecution of the early Christians; four aged monks were brought forward and placed under a pump, and the water was allowed to congeal on them until they were frozen to death. These acts appeared so marvellous, that some thought that such barbarities could not be committed by a civilized people—such cruelties did indeed appear to be almost incredible; but, as he had already stated, he apprehended that the statements he had made were but too true. These unfortunate females were finally given over to a band of drunken soldiers, and the greater number of them died of the treatment they had received. Out of forty-eight, only eleven survived, and those were so mutilated—their eyes having been torn out, and their limbs so injured—that they could not long survive. Three only managed to escape. He did feel very anxious on the subject, as there had been assertions made against the Emperor of Russia; and, as this Government was on amicable terms with that sovereign, he was desirous that some inquiry should be made into the matter. He was sure it could not be considered that the English Government were influenced by any hostile or improper motives, but that they were interfering for a humane and benevolent purpose, and to endeavour to mitigate and prevent the recurrence of such cruelties in future. The question he would ask the noble Lord the Secretary for Foreign Affairs was, whether he had received any information upon the subject from the Representative of the British Government at St. Petersburgh; or would the noble Lord have any objection to desire that some information might be afforded upon the subject?

The Earl of ABERDEEN said, that he certainly had read, in common with their Lordships, the accounts to which the noble Lord had referred; and, in answer to his question he had to say, that he had not received any information whatever from Her

Majesty's Minister at St. Petersburgh on the subject. One of Her Majesty's consular agents had referred to the religious persecutions which had taken place with respect to these persons; but he said that he had no knowledge of his own on the subject. He (the Earl of Aberdeen) had not the least doubt that the accounts had been grossly exaggerated. That there might have been religious persecution, was probable—indeed, was certain; but the noble Lord was mistaken in supposing that the individuals were Roman Catholics, who were persecuted in this manner. They were of the Greek Church—the schismatic Greeks who had joined the Established Greek religion. They belonged to what was called the United Greek Church, which about five or six years ago had joined the Established Greek Church; and the bishop who was principally instrumental in bringing about this union, was stated to have had recourse to the persecution to which the noble Lord had alluded, in order to obtain the adhesion of these religious societies of nuns. He (the Earl of Aberdeen) had no knowledge at all further than what he had now stated; and he must say that he really believed that the accounts to which the noble Lord had referred, could not, in any degree, be relied on as authentic. No doubt religious persecution of any kind was sufficiently to be deplored; but that it was accompanied by barbarities such as the noble Lord described, he did not in the least believe. How were the authorities of this country to interfere? He should observe, that those nuns belonged to a description of adherents of the Greek Church, who, while they received and acknowledged the Greek doctrines, acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope, and in that respect differed from the others. He (Earl of Aberdeen) should mention, that when the Emperor of Russia was recently at Rome, the Pope took the opportunity of representing to him the persecution of these individuals, and the Emperor then gave his assurance that he was entirely ignorant of any thing of the kind having taken place—that inquiry should be made—and that if there had been misconduct on the part of any one, they should be called severely to account. Such an assurance was much better than that we should interfere in a matter of such a kind.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, February 10, 1846.

Minutes.] New Writ. For Westminster, *v.* Hon. Captain Henry John Rous, Commissioner of the Admiralty.

New Member Sworn. For Buteshire, the Hon. James Archibald Stuart Wortley.

Public Bills.—2°· Fishing Piers and Harbours (Ireland). *Reported.* Citations (Scotland).

Petitions Presented. By several hon. Members, from an immense number of places, against Repeal of the Corn Laws; and also from a great many in favour of Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Mr. Escott, from Somerset, complaining of the Mode of circulating Corn Law Petitions.—By several hon. Members, from a great many places, against the proposed Government Measure respecting Customs and Corn Importation; and, also, several in favour of the proposed Measure.—By Mr. Ferrand, from the Inhabitants of Keighley, Holderthorpe, and Bradford, for Inquiry into the Anatomy Act.—By Sir Charles Napier, from Colin M'Dougal, for Inquiry into the Andover Union.—By several hon. Members, from a number of places, in favour of Ten Hours' (Factory) Bill.—By Mr. Strutt, from Thomas Parkin, for Inquiry into Locomotion.—By Mr. Farnham, and Sir Thomas Wilde, from Leicester and Worcester, against Enrolment of the Militia.—From Poor Law Guardians of the North Dublin Union, suggesting Measures for the Relief of the Poor (Ireland); and for appointing a Railway Tribunal in Dublin.—From the Presbytery of Kelso, against Licensing Toll Houses (Scotland) for Sale of Spirituous Liquors.

PUBLIC WORKS—LOANS (IRELAND).

Sir H. W. BARRON begged to ask the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer the questions of which he had given notice—namely, what amount of funds there were now available in Ireland for the purpose of lending with interest sums towards the carrying on of public works in that country? Also, whether it were intended to propose or sanction any measure by which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in Ireland would be empowered to sell any portion of their estates, and thereby pay off the 60,000*l.* they had borrowed from Government?

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER said, in reply, that on reference to an Act of Parliament, passed three years since, the right hon. Baronet opposite would observe that a sum of money amounting to 300,000*l.* had been appropriated for public works generally in Great Britain. On this sum demands might be made from Ireland and every part of the United Kingdom. But there had been a further sum of 60,000*l.* proposed exclusively for the use of Ireland, and that had been placed under the control of the Board of Public Works in that country, to which all applications for loans were to be made: 50,000*l.* would be available for this purpose as occasion required. With respect to the question relative to the compelling of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to sell their property, he had to answer that the debt due by that body originally was 100,000*l.*, a considerable portion of which had been already repaid; and it was not, therefore, thought necessary to take any

further measures to compel the repayment of that money.

MERCHANT SEAMEN'S FUND.

ADMIRAL DUNDAS wished to know what were the intentions of Her Majesty's Government with respect to the Merchant Seamen's Fund; and he also wished to ask whether, in their opinion, it was not desirable that a more satisfactory arrangement should be adopted with regard to lighthouses on the coast?

SIR G. CLERK said, in answer to the first question of the gallant Admiral, that he had stated on a former occasion that he had been in communication with several members of the Shipowners' Society, with a view to make further arrangements in regard to the Merchant Seamen's Fund; and he should certainly give to any recommendation from that society the best consideration in his power. With regard to the second question, which appeared to him to relate to a subject of great importance, he believed that that subject was under the consideration of his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

COLONIAL TARIFFS.

MR. HUME moved—

"That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, that She will be pleased to direct that there be laid before this House, Copies of the existing Tariffs and Commercial Regulations of each of the British Colonies and Possessions in the same manner as the Tariffs and Commercial Regulations of Europe and America have been laid before the House."

"That there be laid before this House Copies of the existing Tariffs and Commercial Regulations of British India and the Dependencies thereof, on Exports and Imports, in the same manner as those laid before the House of the European and American States."

The hon. Gentleman said that in the year 1839 he had given a similar notice for returns of the tariffs of foreign countries; and he believed that the last tariff that had been collected had been laid yesterday before the House. Upon the occasion to which he had referred, he had been told by the Government, that without the adoption of any Address to the Crown they would be prepared to present the returns. If some such assurance were given him on the present occasion, he had no wish to persevere in his Motion for an Address to Her Majesty. It was of great importance that they should have before them the commercial regulations of the Colonies; and it was certainly desirable that they should adopt every means in their power for deriving all the benefits they ought to derive from our extensive and valuable Colonies. He believed that up to the present time our Colonies had been a burden instead of a benefit to this country.

DR. BOWRING seconded the Motion. He wished to bear his testimony to the great value of those tariffs of foreign countries which had just been laid before the House. They had been prepared by Mr. Macgregor, and he felt that they did great honour to his knowledge, his zeal, and his industry.

LORD SEYMOUR said, he had very good authority for stating that the documents to which the hon. Gentleman the Member for Bolton had referred, were very inaccurate. He believed they might be justly characterized as dull romances. He wished to ask the right hon. Baronet the Vice President of the Board of Trade on what authority the statements in those documents rested?

SIR G. CLERK said, that the tables had been taken from consular returns sent to this country. If the noble Lord could point out any mistake in any of the documents, he (Sir G. Clerk) should be very happy to make inquiry into the subject, and to enter into any explanation he might be able to offer respecting apparent or real errors. He believed that great pains had been taken in preparing the documents.

MR. HUME begged to state, in answer to the noble Lord who had called those returns "dull romances," that he should be glad to hear the noble Lord point out any romance which could be considered equally useful to the country. He should be extremely sorry to find it go out among the public that there was anything in the returns which could not be proved by official documents. If the noble Lord thought that they contained any errors, let him move for a Committee by whom the subject could be fully investigated. He had reason to know that great trouble had been taken by Mr. Macgregor in preparing the returns, and he thought it was extremely unfair to call them "dull romances."

MR. AGLIONBY had great respect for the talent and industry of the Gentleman who had framed the documents in question; and he thought it was rather hard that he should be attacked for an alleged inaccuracy in one document. If there was any complaint of the information furnished, the best plan would be to appoint a Committee to whom the subject would be referred, and who would report to the House.

He had, however, risen principally for the purpose of expressing the great pleasure he had felt on hearing the hon. Gentleman the Member for Montrose bring forward his Motion for returns of our colonial tariffs, and on hearing that Motion seconded by the hon. Gentleman the Member for Bolton. He was delighted to find hon. Members in that House turning their attention towards our colonial affairs. He hoped that the importance of our Colonies would not be lost sight of; but that they would be made the means of adding to the prosperity of this country.

SIR G. GREY said, he wished to throw out a suggestion with respect to the manner in which such documents as those in question were usually printed. They appeared in large and ponderous volumes—in a shape which prevented their circulation throughout the country, and which was extremely inconvenient to the Members of that House. He would suggest to the Members of the Printing Committee, of which the hon. Baronet the Member for the University of Oxford was chairman, to take into their consideration whether some mode of printing these documents less expensive than the present, and which would render them more accessible to the public, might not be adopted.

SIR. R. H. INGLIS said, it was much more convenient that documents such as those referred to should be printed in a tabular form; and folio volumes were much better fitted than octavos for containing documents in that form. With respect to the returns in question, he wished to observe that they had not come under the cognizance of the Printing Committee, for they had been printed under the direction of Her Majesty's Government. It had been said by the noble Lord (Lord Seymour) that the returns were very inaccurate. Now, he had not the good fortune to concur in political opinion with the Gentleman who had framed those returns, but he thought that it would be fair to that Gentleman that a Committee should be appointed who would inquire into the alleged inaccuracies in those documents.

MR. HUME wished to state, in reference to a suggestion made by the right hon. Baronet the Member for Devonport (Sir G. Grey), that a Committee of that House, which had sat ten years ago, and of which he had been chairman, had recommended that returns should be published in a tabular form; but folio volumes were those best fitted for that form. He thought, however, that it was desirable that the information contained in the documents referred to, and which he considered exceedingly valuable, should appear in a more portable form.

Motion agreed to.

APPEAL IN CRIMINAL CASES.

MR. EWART wished to put a question to the hon. and learned Gentleman the Solicitor General, or to the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department. He begged leave to remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that he had last year brought in a Bill for giving a right of appeal in criminal cases. It had always appeared to him (Mr. Ewart) that such a Bill was very much required; and he wished to know from the hon. and learned Gentleman, or from the right hon. Baronet, whether it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to remedy the existing defect in our criminal law?

SIR J. GRAHAM said, that from what had fallen from him on a former evening, when he had referred to the case of the Brazilian pirates, and the absence of any right of appeal in criminal cases, the House would partly have anticipated that the attention of Her Majesty's Government had been directed to that subject; and he had no hesitation in stating to the hon. Gentleman, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, that it was their intention to introduce a measure for giving a limited right of appeal in criminal cases.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE.

The Order of the Day having been read for resuming the Adjourned Debate on the Customs and Corn Importation Acts,

VISCOUNT EBRINGTON presented several petitions from places in Devonshire, praying for an immediate repeal of the Corn Laws.

MR. A. STAFFORD O'BRIEN said, that his noble Friend the Member for Plymouth (Viscount Ebrington) had just presented some petitions which brought to his recollection a part of the speech delivered last night by the noble Lord the Member for London. His noble Friend had presented petitions praying that the repeal of the Corn Laws might be immediate. The noble Lord had stated last night that it had been the custom of Her Majesty's Ministers not to make up their minds as to the details of their measures before consulting those interests which might be chiefly af-

fected; and the noble Lord had called upon the Ministers to take the question of immediate repeal into their consideration; as their proposed measure had been laid before the farmers, and, according to the noble Lord, the farmers had expressed a general opinion in favour of immediate repeal. Whether there had been such an opinion expressed by the farmers with whom the noble Lord had conversed, he would not take upon himself to say; and neither would he pronounce any opinion of his own as to the feelings of the farmers upon the point. But he would remark that, as regarded the Government, they had not taken the opinion of the agriculturists at all upon the question. And however much, therefore, other interests might feel obliged to the right hon. Baronet for the communications into which he had entered with them on the subject of his commercial measures, after they had been announced to the House—and there were obvious reasons why such communications should not be entered into until after these announcements had been made—he was not aware, during his Parliamentary experience, that the right hon. Gentleman had ever extended a similar courtesy to the agriculturists. In entering on the discussion of this great question, he had little hope of engaging the attention of the House by any novelty of argument. As far as he himself was personally concerned, he had little to say. He had nothing to regret—nothing to explain—nothing to retract. Whatever might have been the change of others, he had not changed his opinion. He would say now what, perhaps, he had often said before; and, if he had not had the advantage of consulting those tariffs which the hon. Member for Bolton thought so useful, he had, at any rate, the same prejudice and the same bigotry, as it would be called, which he had ever had. His right hon. Friend who spoke last night (Mr. Sidney Herbert) had not only felt it his duty to announce an alteration in his opinions, in reference to the present great question, but also to deliver himself of a sentence upon which, as it formed the salient point of his right hon. Friend's speech, he hoped to be permitted to comment. The purport of the sentence was, that the law of 1815 was the greatest error which the landlords had ever committed. That might be the case; but he turned to that side of the House, and begged to ask who the parties were that urged the landed interest of the country not to explain or retract that error, but to persevere in and maintain that law? If the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government said, that he had now given an opportunity to hon. Members to retract their opinions as regarded that measure, he must say that although he felt much obliged to the right hon. Gentleman; yet he must add, that opportunities had not been previously wanting. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton had given them ample opportunity year after year; but they always refused to avail themselves of the opportunity; and the most able and eloquent reasons for continuing the error of 1815 had proceeded from the bench upon which the right hon. Gentleman was seated. This brought him to a question which might be slurred over, but on which he should feel himself called upon to make some remarks, which, he feared, would be extremely distasteful to his right hon. Friend (Mr. Sidney Herbert). His right hon. Friend said that if he had changed his opinions, he should be ashamed of himself if he did not rise and declare that change. He should have been ashamed also if his right hon. Friend had not made that declaration. But what he wanted to know was, upon what principles parties in this country were in future to be kept together? You might say, that all this was the old story; and that here they were attacking the right hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel), in support of a bad case, by personalities. He (Mr. S. O'Brien) distinctly denied that retort. It was not the case. He was as far as any man from imputing to the occupants of that bench where the Cabinet Ministers sat, any other than the purest and most patriotic motives. But it was notorious that this country had been governed by party. It might be an obsolete prejudice; but he was not ashamed to own himself a party man. It had been hitherto the custom in this country to believe that discussions of questions on party principles — that distinct enunciations of those principles, and a rigid adherence to them, formed, on the whole, notwithstanding all the imperfections of the system, and all its anomalies, the best mode of eliciting truth, and the best process for conducing to sound legislation. But not only had the Government changed the principles upon which it came into office; it had taught the lesson that, henceforth, practically, no principles were to bind a party together. He had not been long in the House before the present Government came into office; the first vote which he ever gave was to

place them in their present position. But he could undertake to say that, if ever an Opposition was conducted upon party principles, marshalled by party tactics, and led with party views, that Opposition was that which was marshalled, headed, and led by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. The disappointment had been too bitter—too great, and too general, at his change, to permit any feelings of personal friendship, any fears of giving offence, preventing him from giving a distinct reprobation of such conduct. His right hon. Friend (Mr. S. Herbert) had said—and that was the main substance of his speech—that as the law of 1842 had failed, he was, therefore, prepared to abandon the protection principles on which the Government had been formed. His right hon. Friend had said that the law of 1842 had failed; but that word "failure" was to be understood in two ways. When he remembered what his right hon. Friend had been in 1845, when he solicited and obtained the suffrages of the farmers of Wiltshire, and what he was in 1846 when he had become a convert to free trade, he wished to know whether the law of 1842 had failed to the Sidney Herbert of last year, or to the Sidney Herbert of this? He was quite sure that his right hon. Friend did not suppose that the ingenuity of man could frame a law agreeable to the wishes and opinions of both those Gentlemen. His right hon. Friend in 1845 would have found the measure a failure if it had admitted corn too freely. His right hon. Friend in 1846 would have found the measure a failure if it did not let corn in as freely as possible. Highly as he thought of the legislative powers of the right hon. Baronet, and sincerely as he might believe him capable of effecting anything—and the House had seen how much he was capable of effecting—still he could not conceive that the right hon. Gentleman could ever succeed in satisfying Gentlemen of such variable tempers and opinions. He could see nothing in what had been stated beyond an argument, perhaps, for the re-adjustment of the law. But it appeared that the question of the averages had been all that had disappointed his right hon. Friend. If this were so, it would be competent to him to open again that question, for then the dispute would still be, not as to the principle of protection, but as to the law by which that principle should be carried out. And if his right hon. Friend thought fit to give up the sliding scale, there was still a fixed duty left for him—he might still have rested upon a fixed duty—that halting-place between a sliding scale and a free trade. But, in his opinion, his right hon. Friend had judged too quickly of a law which had been only three years in existence, answered two years, and failed one. Two years' success and one year's failure, was surely a bad reason to induce him, not only to give up the measure, but even to abandon the principles of his whole life. His right hon. Friend had also stated, that this was not a question of pickings, or a question of delegates; but these words seemed contrary to the tenor and meaning of his right hon. Friend's speech. Surely, his right hon. Friend did not mean to charge any of those on the same side of the House, whatever their opinions on controverted questions might be, with being more desirous of pickings, or of becoming delegates, than was his right hon. Friend himself. But if he said that this was a question of pickings, or of delegates, or that the great Conservative party ought not to be bound together, or split asunder, by a mere question of imports, he would remind his right hon. Friend that that was not the way to talk of a great question like this. If it was merely a question as to the import duty on one article, why were such changes of opinion manifested—such propositions agitated—such points raised and discussed? It was not merely a question of import duty when they put out the Government of the noble Lord opposite. It was not merely a question of an import duty on one article of produce which sent that House, at the last dissolution, to the constituencies of the country. It was not merely a question of the duty on one article when the country returned a triumphant majority, nor when that majority placed the present Government on the Treasury bench below him. Whatever they did, if they had changed their opinions, let them say so fairly and manfully; and those who had not participated in that change would, while differing from them, respect their motives, though they might feel their confidence impaired. But let them not make it an insignificant question; let them not say that the Gentlemen opposite, who had worked so long to bring about the consummation now about to be achieved, had done this on a mere question of import, and by phraseology like that attempt to disguise the magnitude of the question. The change might be for good, or for evil;

strong and antagonist opinions were entertained concerning it; but he had never heard until now, and he was sorry to hear it at all, that this was a light and unimportant question. His right hon. Friend had mentioned Ireland, and he had charged his hon. Friend the Member for the University of Oxford with saying that there was no ground for the present measure from the potato rot, in a particular parish in Ireland. He did not, he could assure the House, undervalue the imminent danger to which that country was exposed, and he was glad to find that the hon. and learned Member for the county of Cork, intended to bring the whole question before the House to-morrow. But he had almost said, that his right hon. Friend had (though he knew it would be impossible for his right hon. Friend to do so) unfairly represented his hon. Friend the Member for the University of Oxford. His hon. Friend had said, as he understood, that for a particular evil there should be a particular remedy; they were the last persons who would hesitate to open the ports in time of national distress to prevent the supply of food to starving people. But what his hon. Friend had said was, that a sufficient case had not been made out to alter the whole commercial legislation of the country—to introduce a new principle for a disaster they hoped would be casual; and withal, to announce that new principle without in the least tracing out how the Corn Laws had contributed to the famine of Ireland, or how the total abrogation of those laws was likely to alleviate that country's distress. And he would remark, that while the Government was bringing forward this question of free trade as a benefit to Ireland as well as to England, all the letters which he had received from Ireland—and the hon. Member for Limerick also, who in Ireland was only second in influence to the hon. and learned Member for Cork—had pronounced strongly against a repeal of those laws. They all asked for employment. They wished to have the railways forwarded, and they thought there would be great difficulty in obtaining seed for potatoes next year; but they said, if you wish to complete our ruin, destroy our agriculture. And he must remark, with reference to the potato disease, that his right hon. Friend (Mr. S. Herbert) had praised the Commissioners for not having given way to the panic in the first instance; and then, subsequently, for not having fallen into what he called the fool's paradise. In his opinion, neither course was correct. He had just arrived in England from Ireland, when he was called back by the frightful accounts which reached him of the failure of the potato crop; and if the disease had continued at the same rate of progress till the present time, he did not believe that a single vegetable would have been left. Anxious to ascertain the real extent of the evil, he carefully examined every field in the district around him, and found the disease rather diminishing than on the increase. He took all the precautions in his power for the protection of the poor in his neighbourhood, and went away in a fool's paradise as they might call it, thinking that no great cause existed for alarm. Unfortunately, however, the rot had again set in—owing either to the continuance of the wet weather, or to some mysterious dispensation which it was not given them to understand; and he believed that there never was a country which called for more urgent measures upon the part of a Government than Ireland, and that there had never been a Government more anxious for the welfare of that country than was the existing Government. But it was only fair to the hon. Baronet the Member for Oxford, to say that the case of the Irish farmer would not be met by this proposed change in our commercial system. He did not believe, if they passed the Government Bill to-morrow, that one more quarter of corn, or one more hundred-weight of meat, would be placed within the reach of the poor of Ireland, unless it were accompanied by other measures. His right hon. Friend said, that when he looked round Wiltshire, he wondered how the poor could live; and this he said after advising them not to allow their attention to be directed to particular spots, but to extend their view over the whole country. All he could say was, that he had always found the misery of agricultural districts greatly attributable to the conduct of those who owned the soil; and rural districts possessed this great advantage over manufacturing parts—that whenever you saw a parish destitute, cottages wretched, and families half starved and half clothed, you could inquire the name of the man, whether landlord or farmer, who was responsible for this state of things. He had conversed with some Wiltshire farmers that very morning, who bore most honourable testimony to the conduct of his right hon. Friend, and did him the justice to say that no part of the distress to be found in

that county was attributable to him, or those who belonged to him. But on the other hand, if the right hon. Gentleman had succeeded in proving the existence of distress in Wiltshire, he had totally failed, as in the case of Ireland, to show how the repeal of the Corn Laws would remedy it. The right hon. Gentleman had read a letter from a Wiltshire farmer, the deduction from which was no more than this, that employment and the wages of employment tended to the happiness and morality of the labourer; but he should have followed up his argument, and have shown how the repeal of the Corn Laws would have secured this object, and he would then not only have made his reasoning complete, but would have offered an argument in favour of the abolition of the Corn Laws not yet given. But if the right hon. Gentleman was at liberty to select Wiltshire as an example, he might be permitted to refer to Northamptonshire, where the wages of labour were from 12*s.* to 14*s.* a week, and where he should be glad to show his right hon. Friend, if he would do him the favour of visiting that part of the country, specimens of cheerful cottages, comfort, and agricultural prosperity, which he was sure would gratify his benevolent heart, and show him that, at any rate, agricultural prosperity was consistent with the continuance of the present Corn Laws. But, in the course of their ramble, he should also have to show his right hon. Friend some bad heavy clay land—clay land which the noble Lord the Member for the city of London might describe as of so adhesive a nature as to affect the intellect of those who cultivated it. And as the noble Lord must be supposed to be well acquainted with the soil of the Bedford purlieus, he had no doubt alluded to its Representatives in Parliament, though the noble Lord had looked at the Member for Northamptonshire. But the noble Lord last night had laid down three propositions, the long and short of which were, that protection was no longer any benefit to those upon whom it was conferred, and that in the end it would be the wiser policy to leave the manufacturers or the agriculturists of the kingdom to flourish or to fade, according to the energies they themselves possessed, or the skill they employed. Now, he thought that it was not quoting the noble Lord opposite, and the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, unfairly, if he assumed that that was the course of legislation which they intended to carry out for the future. But he, for himself, notwithstanding the imputations of bigotry, of prejudice, or of clayey intellect, which might be thrown out against him, would venture boldly and unequivocally to dissent from the propositions of the noble Lord, and from the course of legislation thereon to be founded. And he would add, that if even he admitted the truth of all the doctrines upon which political economists were agreed they must prove far more before he could assent to the proposed measure of the Government. Hon. Gentlemen opposite were too apt—nay, indeed, the literature of the day, and the habits of thought which prevailed among them all—were too apt to confound political economy with the science of legislation. He had always understood political economy to be the science which treated of the amassing and of the distribution of wealth. Now, if the accumulation and the distribution of wealth constituted the whole science of legislation, the terms would be—and might be fairly used as—synonymous. But the accumulation and distribution of wealth was one amongst the many elements of which the science of legislation consisted. And if hon. Gentlemen opposite, or the Government, could prove that wealth—in the modern sense of the word, in which it meant money—not in the old sense, in which it meant prosperity—would surely follow from a certain course, they would have established, not the whole, but not even a half of the case they were now setting up. He would take the case of protection to British industry generally. The noble Lord opposite had last night said that the cause of British industry, as a whole, had recently been interwoven with the cause of agricultural protection. This was not the case. The cause of British industry had always been allied with the cause of agricultural protection, and the farmers of England had always been desirous of protecting their manufacturing fellow countrymen. And here he might be permitted to remark to those hon. Members who were in the habit of throwing darts upon the Protection Societies, that he would be willing upon a future occasion to enter into their history, to explain their origin, and to defend their proceedings. He was in nowise ashamed of his connexion with them. But it was said, that "labour was the property of the poor man." Now, he did not know that it was quite correct or convenient to call different things by the same name. The noble Lord the Member for Lancashire, on the first

night of the Session, had called the farmers manufacturers; but this mode of reasoning appeared to his mind too easy and showy to be logical or accurate. But he would take the proposition as it was laid down, that "labour was the property of the poor man." That was the dogma given out by the political economists, and supported by the right hon. Baronet and Her Majesty's Government. But, addressing such language to the poor labourers of England, unless he sadly misunderstood the consequences of such teaching, they must not stop there. They must not tell the poor man that his property was not to be protected. If they did tell the poor man so, would he not consider this—that whilst they were blessed with leisure, possessed of wealth, and armed with power, the property of the poor man must protect itself? He would not say that such would be the reflection or consideration of all; but that would be the effect upon the country at large. This question of protection, too, came most unfortunately from a country which boasted of employing the labour of children from seven or eight years old. Having found, however, that interference with labour was difficult, were they prepared to abandon their labouring fellow countrymen, and watch in passive silence whether the Englishmen or the foreigner triumphed? He did not speak of the shopkeeper or the person who did possess some property. His interest was, soon to become a convert to that favourite maxim of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market; but he would take the case of certain of the duties proposed to be reduced by the measure of the right hon. Baronet. They would not better illustrate his argument than any other case of a similar character, but they would be fresh in the the remembrance of the House. Supposing, then, that acting upon that axiom of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market, he, a wealthy man in England, furnished his house with paper-hangings from Paris. Supposing that he travelled in a continental carriage, that he purchased all his hardware from Germany; supposing all this, when he looked out of the window of his gaudy house, or his foreign-built carriage, what would he see? A vast multitude of unemployed starving Englishmen. And what would they say to him? "We are poor English paper-stainers; we are Birmingham hardwaremen; our trade has been taken away from us—what are we to do?" And what could beh is reply? "My good fellows, I have done the best I could to make you idle—to take all employment out of your hands—to leave you starving; but, believe me, I did it not from a bad motive." What consolation would it afford them to be told, that all this happened; because, on the 27th of January, 1846, Sir R. Peel propounded a doctrine in which all political economists were agreed, that labour might protect itself, and that we must buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; and that the Legislature in abolishing protection was actuated by no consideration of self-interest, but solely with a desire that the great truths of political economy should have fair play? Would any one venture to say, that the feelings in the hearts of these poor people would be the feelings of love, reverence, or attachment to our institutions, or that they could feel that they were living under a paternal government? But it was not only the wide-spread poverty which such a measure would produce which they had to consider. Let them not forget the amount of alienation and disaffection which would be the result. Equal neglect was not impartial kindness; and instead of propounding this hard clumsy dogma that the property of the poor might be left to protect itself, there never was a time when it behoved them more to reflect on the course pursued by their ancestors, sometimes wisely and sometimes unwisely, but always with the view of doing their best to protect the property of the poor from foreign competition, from domestic tyranny, from the oppression of the rich, and from their own madness. Sir (continued the hon. Gentleman) in this House, we are all rich men. More or less so, all at least assume that qualification. Members who have not got it will of course laugh at the notion of having it. [*General laughter*]. But, comparatively, we are all rich. We had a good breakfast this morning, and intend to have a good dinner this evening; and that, Sir, in the eyes of millions of our fellow countrymen, that is the distinction between rich and poor. For really, in the frightful contrasts which present themselves in the situation of those around us, to be able to get two good meals a day, is to be comparatively rich. Well, then, I assume that, in a degree, we are all of us rich. We have announced a doctrine which, whatever may be its ultimate effect, directly tends to our own benefit. It is assuredly the most selfish doctrine that could possibly be enunciated. It is not a question now

between cotton and corn, or corn against cotton. On that question we can tear each other to pieces, and the poor can understand us; but upon the great question of "buying in the cheapest market, and selling in the dearest," how can we be consistent? Begin with the Poor Law. How can you explain upon that principle the taxing my industry for the relief of another person? I am not arguing against a Poor Law, but against the enunciation of a clumsy, a harsh, an impracticable dogma, which you can never act upon—which you dare not act upon—which to attempt to act upon would be to alienate the affections of the people, and to increase your danger in proportion to the extent of your riches; because it is an odious and selfish doctrine in the eyes of your poorer fellow countrymen. Sir, I have never been for excessive duties; nor have I ever contended that a Corn Law should be perpetual. I acknowledge the whole force of the arguments based upon the perpetual increase of population—in this and in foreign countries—and of that also which has not been so much adverted to—the extreme facility of transit in our own. But this is not the subject nor the season for enunciating stubborn dogmas. The poor have enough to bear already; and it were greatly better that we should set ourselves to inquire how best we can ameliorate the condition of our fellow countrymen, than advocate real selfishness (which all can understand) under the guise of so-called political economy, which few can appreciate; for such appears to be the effect of the doctrine to which I have alluded. Sir, we should all of us recollect that we cannot be called here the representatives of the poor man. You chose to do away with the particular constituencies whereby he might have acquired direct representation; but if you had not by your Reform Bill swept them away, I believe that by the action of public opinion and the combination of public bodies (men whose principles should be abhorred, but whose feelings I respect), we should have found in this House representatives of the feelings of the people. Because, however, you have chosen to do this—because your legislation has been hitherto, while you talk of your "respect for the rights of the people," practically directed to the destruction of those rights—taking away their commons—abridging their hours of amusement—prohibiting them from making their poverty known; all this should induce you to be careful how you, the Representatives of the people, who have property, announce that you are unable to protect the only property which millions can ever hope to possess in this world. Adam Smith even has made two exceptions, where other considerations, in his opinion, may enter, beyond those of mere political economy. And so many other exceptions ought to be made, so many other considerations should be embraced—so many qualifications introduced in the subject of free trade, that we ought to be careful how we propound that which it is dangerous ever to try to act upon. Even in this House, you cannot propound this principle of free trade without qualifications and exceptions; and will it not be unwise to announce it absolutely to those who have just intelligence enough to understand, but who have not education enough to appreciate, the exceptions and qualifications it is essential to introduce, and who will only comprehend it in its results as pressing hardly, harshly, and fiercely on them? Sir, one of the exceptions certainly is Agriculture. I am not going into the question of the Corn Laws. It is unnecessary. My opinions are well known, and are unalterable on that subject. But if a nation chooses to protect a particular occupation—considering its salubrity—its moral and social tendencies—and if the nation do not object to pay something towards the attainment of these great objects, surely such a policy is supportable in the case of agriculture. In reference to this, let us recollect the question of the amount of these duties is not a question of principle. When it is said the Corn Laws have constantly been tampered with, it is no proof that they have not all along attained their object. That which was protection ten years ago, may be a degree of protection at the present period neither requisite for the producer, nor justifiable for the consumer. I lay down no rule on this subject, except the absurdity of seeking to lay down rules in cases as complex as these. But I protest against any change in these duties so sudden and so sweeping as is now proposed to us; and I feel disposed to concur with the noble Lord opposite (J. Russell) in thinking that if such a change were to be carried out so suddenly, it would have been far better that the duties in 1842 should have been lower, that the transition might have been more easy, and the shock less abrupt. I have been no inattentive student on this subject during the last four years, and I cannot concur with those who consider the present protection excessive. I may say, however, that there is one change

produced in my opinions on this subject. I began my consideration of it believing it a landlords' question. I did believe that the effect would be so great of a sudden and immediate repeal, that vast quantities of land would come into the market at once, and its value be greatly deteriorated. But, Sir, I greatly doubt if this can be called a "landlords' question;" or if so, it is certainly a question for small landed proprietors. It is not a question for the great landed proprietors—they who would be able to "weather the storm." It may be a question for the small landowner, who, on the faith of Parliament, even if in some sense indiscreetly, may have charged his estate to nearly its full value, and who may, therefore, find it difficult to meet a sudden and severe shock. But the more I consider this question, the more am I satisfied it is a tenant-farmers' question. And, far from thinking that a reason for underrating its importance, it is on that very account I resolve to make my stand against the measure. Apply the precepts of your new philosophy to the tenant-farmer. Suppose prices fall in consequence—partly, perhaps, of an inundation of foreign corn—the tenant-farmer says to his landlord, "I hope, Sir, you will allow me a small abatement in my rent? I may not know so much about draining as Mr. Smith of Deanston; I may not have all the patent implements, nor show the fattest pig; but my family has held under yours for many a generation; we have weathered hard years together; I have worn your colours—and I should be sorry to go elsewhere." The landlord may reply, "My good fellow, I am very sorry for you. You have invested your capital in these drainings and these soils; but so have I mine. You have invested the money—as I have—on the faith of the Legislature. But we are told now by the Prime Minister that we are 'to buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest.' There is a gentleman from the manufactoring districts with more capital than you, ready to invest in your farm. I really must look to my own family arrangements. You talk of feudal times and days long gone by, but it is idle to conjure up old exploded notions—and as for 'colours,' God bless you, my good fellow, there is no 'true blue' now!" Yes! unless the landlord acts towards his tenant a better part and with kindlier feeling than you are now prepared to act towards the whole agricultural body, the tenant-farmer must leave his farm. The manufacturer—whoever he may be—with large capital and more "energy" (if you will), comes in, and the product is perhaps more per acre—and that is called "improvement of agriculture:" but the only men who will suffer—mark!—are the men whose misfortune it was to have been poor comparatively, and whose fatal fault was that they trusted you! A short simple story, Sir, sometimes does better to illustrate an argument than more formal reasoning. Some months ago a farmer told me, "I have had a fortune left me." "Well, then," replied I, "you had better leave these 'cold clays'—take a better sort of land—settle down to it, and make your fortune double." "Sir," replied he, "there are the gravestones of four generations of my family in this parish. My father, grandfather, and great-grandfather worked this farm—I will not go anywhere else. I will try what I can do at home. I will stick to the old farm till the plough breaks in the furrows." Sir, the heart of that man was worth volumes of political economy. And it is hundreds and thousands of men like him, without the same fortune indeed in their pockets—but with the same sort of heart in their bosoms—whom you are driving forth by your legislation with broken hearts and ruined fortunes; and I am sorry to be obliged to add, that when thus driven forth, their keenest associations, their bitterest recollections of ruined fortunes, blighted hopes, and broken hearts, will not be coupled with the name of Cobden! We will not aid you in your triumph over these poor men. We do not envy you the victory you seek to achieve over them. In that triumph we refuse to participate. We may be small in number and uninfluential in debate, but we will raise our voices against the injustice which we may be unable to avert. You may now prepare your measures against those poor men who petition in vain at your table, and who now see ruin staring them in the face—men moderate in prosperity—patient in adversity—and whose misfortune amidst all their virtues is that they trusted you! You may now prepare to conquer them (I can give it no milder name) in strange coalition with men who, true to their principles—can neither welcome you as friends, nor respect you as opponents—and of whom, I must say, in conclusion, that the best and most patriotic among them, will the least rejoice in the ruin and the downfall of a great constitutional party, and will most deplore

the loss of public confidence in public men.

Mr. S. CRAWFORD opposed the Amendment. He did not see how the agriculturists could raise the price of food unless they also raised the rate of wages. It was inhumanity to the poor if the one were done and not the other. By the old Poor Law, wages were raised so as to be in proportion to the price of food. Now, the election of 1841 turned on two points —first, the principle of protection; and, secondly, the restoration of the old Poor Law. The attempt had been made to keep up the prices of food; but had the other pledge been fulfilled? He was not a particular friend to the system of the old Poor Law; but if the one pledge had been carried out, it was the duty of the party which entered Parliament for the double purpose he had described to carry out the other, and declare their intention to do so. But he wished more particularly to touch on the question as it affected Ireland. He differed from the hon. Gentleman who had just spoken, as well as from the majority of Irish landlords. Instead of wishing protective duties on corn for the sake of Ireland, he thought dear corn and dear food the greatest curse that could be inflicted upon that country. It had been said, England was prosperous, why meddle with this law? But when applied to Ireland, the argument fell to the ground. Ireland had long enjoyed protection—had it promoted her prosperity? On the contrary, the greatest wretchedness prevailed; and, referring to landlords, tenants, and labourers alike, he would ask whether any of them had benefited from the system of protection? The Report of the Landlords and Tenants Commission, and also a recent Report of the Irish Poor Law Commissioners, showed that the agricultural population, or cottiers, were badly clothed, badly fed, and subjected to the most severe privations, their only food in many districts being potatoes, their only drink water, while a bed or a blanket was a rare luxury. The Report of the Land Commissioners also bore testimony to the misery of the tenants. In that report reference was made to subletting and middlemen. It was stated that the war with France had greatly raised farming profits, and consequently rents. Many middlemen, who during the long war had amassed much wealth, had become proprietors in fee; others, who had not been so successful, struggled in after years to maintain a position in society which their falling resources could not support—their sub-tenants were unable to pay "war-rents;" the middleman himself, who had come under rent during the same period, could not meet his engagements—all became impoverished; the middleman parted with his interest, or under-let the little land he had hitherto retained in his own hands—himself and family were involved rapidly in ruin. The landlord was, in many instances, obliged to look to the occupier for his rent, or at the expiration of the lease found the farm covered with a pauper, and in many cases superabundant, population. Hence the clearing system and other evils. The condition of the landlords was referred to by the Commissioners of Poor Law Inquiry in Ireland. Referring to the embarrassments of landlords, they stated they had reason to believe that the landed property of Ireland was so deeply encumbered, that a rate of any great extent would absorb the whole income of some of the nominal proprietors if it were to bear the entire charge; and they stated that from a reference to the Masters in Chancery, they had ascertained that the average rent of land in Ireland was under 12*s.* 6*d.* per Irish acre (about 14*s.* 2*d.* English)—that the gross landed rental was less than 10,000,000*l.*; that the expenses and losses were not less than 10 per cent., and the annuities and charges not less than 3,000,000*l.* per annum; so that the net income was less than 6,000,000*l.* per annum. The condition of the agricultural labourer was shown in the Report of the Commissioners of Land Inquiry. They said—

"A reference to the evidence of most of the witnesses will show that the agricultural labourer of Ireland continues to suffer the greatest privations and hardships; that he continues to depend upon casual and precarious employment for subsistence; that he is still badly housed, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid for his labour. The labouring classes live under sufferings greater, we believe, than the people of any other conntry in Europe have to sustain."

Again, at page 35, referring to the condition of the labourers, they said—

"We noticed, with deep regret, the state of the cottiers and labourers in most parts of the country, from the want of certain employment. It would be impossible to describe adequately the privations which they and their families habitually endure. It will be seen in evidence, that in many districts their only food is the potato—their only beverage, water; that their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather; that a bed or a blanket is a rare luxury; and that, nearly in all, their pig and their manure-heap constitute their only property."

The Commissioners of Poor Inquiry in

1836 described the condition of the agricultural labourers as follows :—

"A great portion of them are insufficiently provided with the commonest necessaries of life. Their habitations are wretched hovels. Several of the family sleep together upon straw, or upon the bare ground, sometimes with a blanket, sometimes without so much to cover them. Their food commonly consists of dry potatoes ; and even with these they are obliged often to stint themselves to one spare meal in the day. There are even instances of persons being driven by hunger to seek sustenance in wild herbs."

Under such circumstances he would ask, could they say that the country was benefited by this principle of protection ? There was one part of Ireland which, however, was not altogether dependent upon agriculture—a part where the manufacturing interest was united to that of the agricultural. In this portion of the country the condition of the people was very prosperous—he referred to that part of Ireland in the neighbourhood of Belfast. The union of both interests made the people there both prosperous and happy, and every class was comfortable. He dreaded not the fall of prices. He was convinced that the increase of wages and employment would tend equally to the prosperity of the people and the landlords. Why should Ireland be solely an agricultural country ? He wished it to cease to be so, and not to depend solely upon the profits arising from agriculture. He wished to see the landlords there encouraging manufactures, and there would be less of poverty and discontent in the country. It was said, that if the Corn Laws were repealed, Ireland would lose the benefit of the English markets. What were those benefits ? He admitted that there were vast quantities of provisions sent from Ireland to England, and that there were millions of English money paid for them; but did Ireland benefit by this circumstance ? No. The export of provisions from Ireland, instead of being a test of her wealth or prosperity, was, on the contrary, a test of her abject wretchedness and misery. These provisions were not exports of her superfluities, but exports of the very means of her existence, which the people required for themselves to support existence, and to lead a comfortable life. The Irish people were suffering, therefore, beyond any person's belief. The exports were even recently going out of the country as largely as at any former period. Was not this a proof that the protective system did not show any prosperity in that country, but absolute wretchedness, in the abstraction of these provisions from the actual wants of the people ? The means of supporting life were thus taken from them. If they considered the number of acres there were in Ireland, and the amount of population that was to be fed, the quantity of land was much less in proportion to the number of people there was in England, and yet the land of England was found insufficient to support them. Why then should there be such exports of these provisions from Ireland, when the people were supposed to exist almost wholly by the labour connected with agriculture ? The fact, however, was, that the people there were not generally employed, and had not the means of procuring food for themselves, although they assisted in producing plenty for exportation to this country. If, however, they went to the north of Ireland, they found the people there happy and obedient to the laws—the landlords living amongst their tenantry, and diffusing happiness and comfort around them. This state of things, which was produced by the happy union of the manufacturing and agricultural interests, presented a strong contrast to the other parts of Ireland, where no such advantages existed. Then he said they should give up their system of agricultural protection—they should abolish all laws having a tendency to make food dear and to produce high rents. Let landlords submit at once to the consequences ; cheerfully employ the people, and confer a benefit on Ireland. For the sake of Ireland he wished to see every such tax abolished, that had a tendency to abridge the principle which he had advocated. One of the greatest misfortunes of Ireland was the obligation they lay under to subsist upon the potato — the lowest article of food. Immense evils had followed from this circumstance ; but how were they to alter this state of things ? Why by no other means than that of so cheapening corn that the people would then be able to substitute it for the other. They would not then be subject to such dreadful periodical famines as had been witnessed by the failure of the potato crop of late years. If the landlords looked for compensation for such a change in the law, they would soon find it in the improved system of cultivation that would then be practised, and in the increased incomes consequent thereupon. He was certain that even in the most agricultural parts of Ireland there were portions of land which did not yield half what they might be made to do if there was an im-

proved system of cultivation introduced, and if the tenantry were enabled to enrich their farms. Such lands might be made to produce at least double what they yielded now. He should therefore wish to see them thus induced to improve their cultivation by the abolition of the present protective system. He would not be answerable for the responsibility he felt he should be incurring by affording his assistance to increasing the price of food in Ireland. He would not now recur to the extraordinary circumstances attending the present season in that country; he would but generally remark that there was no year or season of the year when there was not a great number of the population forced to subsist upon wretched and insufficient food, and were literally without the means of procuring the common necessaries of life. With regard to the present state of Ireland, and as to the scarcity of food there, he had no hesitation in saying that it was most alarming. He had only that day received a communication from that part of the country with which he was connected by property, conveying the dreadful information that there was not now one potato left, and the people were consequently obliged to recur to oatmeal and other means of supporting life. He should feel it his bounden duty to give his cordial support to the proposition of the right hon. Baronet opposite.

Mr. H. J. BAILLIE said, it was undoubtedly to be lamented that this question, in which the interests of the people were so deeply involved, should have been made the war-cry of a party; that such industrious efforts should have been made to excite popular feeling upon the subject, so that they could scarcely now approach the discussion without that acrimony and bitterness so inseparable from party feeling, and which was little calculated to lead them to a sound and dispassionate judgment upon one of the most difficult questions of political economy. If it were true, however, that upon the success and prosperity of the agriculture of this country the prosperity of all the other great branches of our national industry depended, we must all have an equal interest in arriving at a sound and satisfactory decision upon the subject. It seemed to be now generally assumed as an axiom, that free trade must, under any circumstances, prove beneficial to a nation: undoubtedly we had never been able to convince foreign nations of this truth, or to induce them to adopt the proposition. Foreign nations are well aware that England possesses peculiar advantages for the production of manufactures. They know that we possess in a greater abundance than any other country the two great elements of manufactures, viz., coal and iron; that the country abounds in fine harbours, rivers, canals, and railroads, by which the raw produce is brought to the doors of our manufacturers; that, possessed of those advantages, together with great mechanical skill, we are enabled to produce our goods at a cheaper rate than they can be produced in any other country. It is for this reason that they have erected barriers in every country of Europe against the introduction of our manufactures, in the shape of protective duties; and it is well known that, fostered and encouraged by these protecting duties, the cotton manufactures of France and Germany have risen into great importance, and have become the source of great wealth and prosperity to those countries. But, could any one doubt, if these protecting duties were withdrawn, that France and Germany would soon be inundated with British goods, and that their own manufactures would be undersold and supplanted in their own markets? If any one doubted that, let him only refer to the history of the the cotton manufactures of India. When first we arrived in that country, we found the population of that vast empire, consisting of not less than 160,000,000 of inhabitants, wholly and entirely clothed in their own beautiful domestic manufactures: by the great cheapness of our own, we had succeeded in supplanting and destroying them. Hundreds of thousands of people were, by these means, thrown out of employment, and reduced to misery and starvation. They had no one to fight their battle. They perished by famine and disease; the great and flourishing cities, the seats of these manufactures, had become desolate and depopulated. The most ruthless conqueror of India had not inflicted greater misery, or caused a greater destruction of human life, than we had done by the introduction of our cotton manufactures into that country. These are notorious facts. We may boast of having established an enlightened Government in India, a Government which gives protection to life and property, which encourages education, and seeks to elevate the condition of the people, but we cannot deny that from the date of our rule in India must also date the decline of the internal prosperity and material wealth amongst the mass of

the people; gradually their condition deteriorated, as gradually we succeeded in destroying their domestic manufactures. Such had been the result of free trade to India. Can we be surprised that foreign Governments hesitate to allow their people to be submitted to chances of a similar fate? Having failed, therefore, in our endeavours to induce foreign nations to adopt the principles of free trade, the question is, shall we try the experiment upon our own people? We have only to refer to the occurrences of the last few years, in order to be convinced of the intimate connexion and relation which exists between our agriculture and our commerce, and how much the success and prosperity of the one depends upon that of the other. Indeed, we need go no further back than to the year 1841. We all remember what was the state and condition of the country at that period; the trade and commerce of the country were stagnant, the manufacturing interest in the deepest state of depression; thousands of our operatives were out of employment, subsisting upon public charity; and the revenue had fallen far below the expenditure of the country. To what was this state of things attributed? for, be it remembered, three years previously we were in a state of great prosperity. This disastrous state of things was attributed to four notoriously bad and deficient harvests in the four preceding years. In like manner, when we look at the prosperous state of the country at the present moment, when we know that every branch of our national industry is flourishing, that our operatives are in full employment upon good and sufficient wages, that our manufacturers have been making greater profits during the last two years than at any former period upon record; to what is this altered state of things to be attributed, unless to the three fine and abundant harvests of the years 1842, 1843, and 1844? But, if this were true, how clearly does it demonstrate to us the vast importance of our agriculture—how clearly does it point out to us that we should devote our attention to promote its prosperity and success! Well, the question is, then, which is the best way to promote the prosperity and success of agriculture?—whether by giving a moderate protection to the produce of our own country, or by leaving it to free and unrestricted competition with those foreign countries who possess as great and superior advantages over us for the production of wheat as we possess over them for the production of manufactures? It is not my intention upon the present occasion to enter into the discussion as to whether there are or not peculiar burdens upon land in this country which are not equally shared by all the other great branches of our national industry. I certainly believe that there are; but I will not enter into that discussion at present, because I think I shall be able to show that the agriculturists of this country labour under a much greater disadvantage in their competition with foreigners, than any that can be attributed to peculiar or exclusive burdens upon the land—to a disadvantage which certainly has never been sufficiently appreciated in these discussions, and one which no labour, or science, or skill on their part can ever enable them to surmount—I mean the disadvantage of the inferiority of the climate of this country, as compared with that of most foreign countries, for the production of the finest descriptions of grain. I do not know that we have any reason to believe that the farmers of this country are more skilful than those of other countries, especially in Belgium, and some parts of Germany. At all events, the general diffusion of knowledge and education will soon place them upon an equality in this respect. But I will suppose, for the sake of argument, that the wages of labour are not greater in this country than they are in Poland. I will also assume that the land in this country is of equal fertility with the land in Poland. The wheat produced in the latter country will nevertheless sell at from 10*s.* to 20*s.* per quarter more than the wheat produced in this country. I know that particular samples may be produced from Kent and Essex, and some of the southern counties of England, equal in quality to the finest Polish wheat; but I speak of that which constitutes the great bulk of the produce of this country, which is of inferior quality. It, of course, depends very much upon the season; this year I believe the difference is equal to 20*s.*, but upon an average it may be calculated at 10*s.* per quarter: this difference arises from the greater heat of the climate, which brings the grain to a finer state of maturity; the skin of the grain is not so thick, and the produce of flour is consequently much greater than from that of our own, Here then is an advantage in favour of the foreign grower of not less than 20 per cent.; and I confess that I am somewhat alarmed at the

prospect of a competition under such circumstances. It seems natural to conclude that a portion at least of our wheat lands will gradually be thrown out of cultivation, in proportion to the increased cultivation of the article that may take place upon the continent of Europe; and the question is, will that be a desirable consummation? It may be at once admitted that the climate of this country is better suited to the growth of pasture than to the production of wheat; and if this were simply a question of political economy—if it were simply a question of pounds, shillings, and pence—it might be at once admitted that it would be more advantageous for the people of this country to turn a portion of their wheat lands into pasture, and to purchase a greater quantity of grain from foreign countries. But this is not simply a question of political economy: it is a question of high national importance; it involves our dependence upon foreign countries, not as heretofore for a small portion of that which we may require; but for a large portion of that which constitutes the food of the people of this country. It may be at once assumed that our chief supply would come from Poland and the north of Germany; in the event of a free trade being established, those are the countries the best suited, both from position as well as the fertility of their soils, to supply the markets of this country. Can it be denied that those Governments would have it in their power to inflict great injury upon us, by closing their ports and stopping our supplies of food? We had an example even in the present year to a limited extent. In consequent of deficient harvests, the ports in Poland have been closed against the exportation of the inferior descriptions of grain which constitute the food of the people of that country. From Belgium they have prohibited the exportation of wheat; and we knew very well, if the Government had thought it necessary three months ago to open our ports by an Order in Council, that France and other countries would have immediately closed theirs, and that not out of any feeling of ill-will towards us, but simply as a matter of precaution, in order to save their own people from the consequences that would ensue were a great demand to be made upon their resources by the people of this country. Foreign nations would doubtless give us of their superfluities in abundant seasons; but their Governments are far too wise to allow their people to suffer inconvenience or privation, in order that the people of this country might obtain their provisions at a cheaper rate; and we should also calculate that the natural operation of free trade would be to increase our population on the one hand, and to decrease the national and natural means of subsistence upon the other. But if I am not one of those who indulge in golden dreams of universal prosperity as the result of these measures, so neither, on the other hand, do I entertain exaggerated fears of the evil consequences that will ensue from them. Unfortunately, the question can now no longer be decided upon its real merits. Before we come to a decision upon a question of this magnitude and importance, it is necessary that we should take into consideration all the circumstances of the country, and, above all, that we should take into consideration the evil consequences that would ensue, should a long and protracted struggle and agitation be maintained upon a question in which the interests of the great mass of the people, at least, appear to be opposed to that of the landed gentry and aristocracy of the country. We must also take into consideration the actual position which this question has assumed, not only in the country, but also in this House. In the country we find the community divided into two great classes, in determined hostility to each other; the one class resolved to have a total and immediate repeal of all protective laws; the other class equally resolved to admit of no compromise, but to maintain the existing law. Such is the position of the question in the country; and what is the position of the question in this House? Here we find all the great and leading statesmen on both sides, men of all parties, united in opinion that some great alteration in the existing law is necessary; and those who are anxious to maintain protection on its present footing, avowedly, have not the materials amongst them wherewith to form an Administration that will be likely to receive either the support or the confidence of the country. That being the case, it appears that we have but a choice of two alternatives, either to give our support to the measure that has been brought forward by Her Majesty's Government; or, by opposing that measure, to throw out the Government, and to make way for the Administration of the noble Lord opposite and his friends,

who are equally pledged to a total and immediate repeal of all protective laws. And what are we to gain by such a change? Under these circumstances, I shall give my support to the Motion now before the House; and I feel persuaded that in so doing I am pursuing a course better calculated to promote the interests of the country than those who, either from a sense of duty, or from a feeling of consistency, think it necessary to give every opposition and resistance in their power to these measures; knowing, at the same time, as they well must know, that, although this opposition may possibly delay these measures for a time, though it may possibly throw the country into confusion, and bring still greater evils upon us, yet that ultimately, and under existing circumstances, it cannot prove successful.

Mr. LEFROY, after referring to the advocacy of the measure by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. S. Crawford), on the ground of the benefit it would confer upon Ireland, said, he was anxious to ask that hon. Gentleman in what way the support of such a measure would improve the condition of the lower orders in that country, or raise the circumstances of the Irish landlords? For his own part, though he was grateful to the Government for some measures which they had adopted in reference to that country, yet he could not give them his support in reference to the measure before the House. And he would state why he was opposed to this project of the Ministry, and particularly as he considered that it became every county Member from that part of the Empire to state his reasons for opposing this measure, and not to let it go forth that he was led to do so under any influence of private feelings. He did feel, then, that at this moment, when all the greater statesmen in that House had but one opinion upon the subject, and when those who were of equal weight, but not of equal official consequence, were compelled by the force of circumstances, and though opposed to the measure, to vote in favour of it—when men like the noble Lord the late Member for Dorsetshire (Lord Ashley), had rather relinquish their seat in that House than vote against the measure—under all these important circumstances, he did still feel that it was utterly impossible for him to vote in support of the proposal of the Government. It was time, indeed, for every man to put to himself the question—was it for the advantage of this country that the Corn Laws should be repealed? All those evils and dangerous consequences which his hon. Friend had argued would attend this measure in reference to this country, would of necessity fall with greater force upon Ireland. What would naturally be the consequence of such a measure? If the exports of Ireland, which were very great, were to be diminished, must not the landlords of that country be seriously affetced? Could rents be paid? And must not the agriculturists of Ireland turn those lands, which now gave employment to the people, into pasture lands, which would not afford the same extent of employment? And suppose that the results which were anticipated from this measure, by those who brought it forward, should fail of being realized, that those lands should be turned into grass, and the people deprived of employment, would not Ireland, let him ask the House, become, under such terrible circumstances, a land of trouble, sorrow, and destitution, beyond all that was ever heard or conceived? With respect to the merits of the measure itself, he considered it was a most hazardous and dangerous experiment. And why was he asked to give it his support? Was he appealed to for his support by the Gentlemen opposite, who had consistently supported measures of this character, and who had conscientiously pursued a free-trade policy? No; he was called upon by the right hon. Baronet, who, during the greater portion of his own political life, and for the whole of his (Mr. Lefroy's) had been leading him into error, except for the last two or three years. He must say. that he thought there were questions which it particularly belonged to a man's own conscience and understanding to judge of; and, for his own part, he trusted he might truly say, that he had never followed a Minister, and given up, in doing so, his conscientious feeling. But if party was to be admitted to be for the benefit of the country—and he believed it was—he did believe that there were several great and important questions, beyond his own comprehension, perhaps, and for the consideration of which he had neither talent, nor time, nor opportunity, in regard to which it was the best course to look about among public men, and to follow him whose course of policy appeared the most salutary. It was on grounds such as this that he had given his humble support to the right hon. Baronet. But he must say, at the same time, that he should consider he resembled a bird ensnared by a whistle,

if he allowed himself to be drawn into a support of the measure before the House, merely because the right hon. Gentleman had changed his opinion upon a question of such great importance, and without giving one solid reason for such change. The hon. Member then said that, if he were hereafter to be expected to follow a different line of policy from that which he had hitherto adopted on questions of this nature, it would be well to consider whether it would not be wiser to follow, on such measures, those as leaders, who had recommended such a course of policy as these questions involved, for the whole of their political lives. That, however, was not likely to be his own case. In reference to the right hon. Baronet, he still hoped that he would be found bringing forward measures in regard to Ireland which would tend to the benefit of Ireland, and in those measures he would give him his support. It had been said, that those who voted for free-trade measures should support those men who had honestly entertained free-trade principles, and who had hitherto advocated them with zeal, straightforwardness, and ability. He should, however, act in accordance with the views he had now stated. If the measure should turn out to be for the benefit of the country, he should be subjecting himself to some censure by having obstinately resisted it; but if it should prove dangerous and destructive to the interests of the country, he should have, at least, the satisfaction that, as an humble individual, he had entered his protest against the measure. But, however good it might turn out, the experiment must be admitted to be of a most perilous character.

Viscount CLEMENTS said, it had been alleged that the proposed measure would be most injurious to the landlords of Ireland; he had not the least objection, as an Irish county Member, to meet that assertion; he trusted he should not for so doing be considered less the farmer's friend than any hon. Gentleman opposite. For the last six years he had earnestly endeavoured to improve the agriculture of his neighbourhood, and he had made himself intimately acquainted with the wants and condition of the farmers and the labouring classes of the county he had the honour to represent. He must own that some of the arguments of the hon. Member for North Northamptonshire had a little startled him: he had heard him state that ruin to agriculture would not only be the consequence of the policy of free trade; but also that the artisan, the coachmaker, and paper-stainer, would be found standing idle in the market-place, seeking employment and finding none. To this picture of distress and difficulty which he had drawn, he might have added the present state of the farmer and agricultural labourer in Ireland. He might there have found the market-places crowded with labourers, able and willing to work, seeking employment, but unable to find it, and he might there have found that corn was grown at the cheapest rate, and sold in the dearest market; yet did that produce happiness or advantage to that country? He believed it would be found from every inquiry into the state of Ireland, that nothing could be more melancholy, nothing more destitute or deplorable, than the condition of the labouring population. Their state was such that it was impossible for any one to imagine it, unless he had been an eye-witness of it, and cognizant himself of that misery and total destitution. That destitution had lately been most fully and usefully laid before the public by the enterprise of a leading publication in this country. The gentleman intrusted with the inquiry had depicted in strong and forcible language the total destitution of the poor in certain localities; and he (Lord Clements) was prepared to admit, that in no one single syllable written by the Commissioner employed by that publication had he in the slightest degree overstated the case. He believed, indeed, that if it were possible for language to draw the picture more forcibly, it might have been done without in the least deviating from the truth. He would turn to the evidence taken before Lord Devon's Commission, which appeared to him particularly relative to the present case. It was the evidence given by Mr. J. Duke, a medical gentleman who had charge of the fever hospital at Mohill:—

"What is the general description of the district?—It is principally tillage.

"Can you state the population of the district?—It is very great; I do not know the exact number. In the district which I am acquainted with there are nearly 40,000 persons, and there is scarcely a resident gentleman within twelve or thirteen miles in one way and twenty-five miles in the other direction.

"What are the most usual crops?—The only crops latterly are potatoes and oats: flax very little to what it used to be.

"What quantity of oats does the 30s. land produce?—Six sacks of twenty-eight stones are considered a fair produce by a farmer, because it soon runs out the land with them, and it does not produce as much as it would with me.

"How many sacks would you grow upon the same description of ground?—I should average two or three more than those who are around me.

"What is the produce of the potatoes?—That is very different indeed.

"What has your own produce averaged?—Thirty barrels, of eight stones, is considered a good crop for the best land, but the people have not half that. If they had a mode of tilling it properly, with sufficient manure, they could have as much as the best description of farmers; but they have not manure, and they generally till it very late in the season.

"Does the subletting or subdivision of farms still continue?—To a great extent.

"Is it permitted by the landlords?—The two landlords in the immediate neighbourhood, * * * * * * * * * do not permit it; but it is carried on in the parish of Cloone, where there is no resident landlord or agent to prevent it. It is a common practice; where a man has five acres he will subdivide it with three sons.

"With respect to the condition of the farming population, are the large farmers improving in their means?—There are very few large farmers in this country.

"Are the small tenantry improving in their condition, or otherwise?—They are 50 per cent. worse than they were twenty years ago.

"Are the labourers improving?—Quite the reverse; nothing can be more wretched.

"What is the cause of their being so wretched?—The value of the commodity (labour) is so reduced in price they are not able to pay their rents, and they are lying naked and in such a state that it would hardly be believed. I am obliged to visit the people, being a medical man, and go in where no gentleman would go in. They have no bedstead; they are lying on a small quantity of straw—sometimes rushes; they have no covering over them, or one blanket among six. When fever sets in, in any particular case, the whole family generally take it. Latterly * * * * has got up a fever hospital, and now they are brought into it immediately, and that saves the rest of the family; but it is not so extensive a thing, from want of funds, as would be desirable."

He could confirm every statement contained in this extract from the Report. He had seen as many individuals as a mother and four children lying on the earthen floor without anything but a rug to cover them, all in the fever, the neighbours afraid to go near them, and the filth so piled up at the door that it was with the greatest difficulty he was able to get in. He had witnessed scenes of wretchedness and distress in that neighbourhood which required the strongest nerves to be able to examine. The evidence thus continued:—

"Is the state you have mentioned of the poor people here a general description of the lower classes?—Yes, it is.

"With respect to food, what is their condition?—It is never better than potatoes and milk in summer, and in winter they have not the milk. Sometimes they get a herring, or stirabout is considered wholesome food; but latterly they have not been able to get that.

"If they get a halfpenny they buy a quart of butter-milk, or sometimes in charity the farmer gives it them. But in speaking of the wretched condition of the people, I speak of cottiers who work a certain number of days for the farmers.

"Is the condition of a farmer holding a farm of two or three acres better than you have described?—Yes, where he derives from the head landlord at a fair rent.

"Have farmers of that description usually bedstead and blankets?—The two-acre men I frequently find without bedsteads, but I generally see one for the old couple, and the rest of the family generally lie on the ground. It is lamentable to see their state, to which, above all other things, I attribute the fever that prevails to a frightful extent in this country.

"How many days' work in a week do they usually give for their house and garden?—Generally in this locality three days in a week, and some of the farmers give them work every day in the week.

"At what rate do they pay them; what are they paid when not working up their rent?—Generally 6*d.*, when fed; but it is a common thing for a man to offer himself without any price, merely to be fed at this season of the year.—Some means should be devised to prevent the people lying on the ground with no more straw than you could put in your hand. In many cases of fever they are not able to get a pint of milk to make the gruel, and I have been round to the priests to get them to beg a few pounds of gentlemen to save lives in that way."

There was one more answer, which was so creditable to the poor people who gave it, that, though a little beside the subject, he would read it:—

"You have referred to the destitute state of the labouring population; do you conceive that many of them would be disposed to emigrate, if means were afforded?—Yes; those that are married, and those that are not married, would be glad to go. We have encouraged that to a certain extent by the loan funds, by parties getting bail from their relations; and if we had funds we could send out thousands, and particularly females, who invariably send back the money to those who have become bail for them, that they should not be processed by us. We give twelve months to enable those who go out to America to send back the money. Females generally do so; they are more frugal and more affectionate to relatives at home. The males may get married and leave the bail to pay."

Now, this was a lamentable state of things, but he felt perfectly satisfied of the truth of every syllable of the statement. He could say even more than this gentleman stated. He had hardly ever known a single summer pass without the occurrence of a scarcity. During the last summer the people were on the point of suffering a famine from the failure of the potato crop. Had that failure been as extensive in the neighbouring counties as in Leitrim, they would have had a most awful visitation,

This year additional quantities of ground had been broken up; it was difficult exactly to ascertain the quantity of ground so brought into cultivation; it was also difficult to make any calculation as to the increase of produce in consequence of it, and equally so to estimate the quantity of potatoes which would be found in a state of disease and unfit to be used as food. But this he must say—the Commission recently appointed by the Government to inquire into the state of that disease had at least had this beneficial effect—it had forewarned the people, and had shown them that their neighbours were as badly off as themselves, and told them that they had nothing to depend upon but their own exertions. They could not, as during last summer, apply to the neighbouring counties for assistance. In many instances, persons had already laid in a large stock of oatmeal; but how many thousands were there who could not so provide means of subsistence in advance! Many in his neighbourhood had not yet paid for the food they were obliged to buy last summer: how could they get credit during the next? He might now inquire, had protection been of the slightest service to the farmers of Ireland? Had it fed the people, or prevented the agricultural labourers from "standing idle in the market-place," as the hon. Member North for Northamptonshire anticipated they would be compelled to do? But a clearer idea of the state of the people might be gained from a report of the trustees of "The Reproductive Loan Fund" in the county of Leitrim, in which they state as follows:—

"We are of opinion that it would be advisable that the accumulated interest of the capital in our care might now be very fairly and very properly laid out in a manner beneficial to those poor persons through whose means it has been so accumulated, and for whose sole benefit the capital placed in our care was originally intended.

"In arriving at this opinion, we are led to examine the actual state of the neighbourhood, and the condition of the people; and we find that the portion of the parish of Mohill within the county of Leitrim, comprises an area, 26,786 statute acres, including bog and water, which are very abundant, but of which we have no official record to enable us to deduct such parts as are unproductive, and do not assist in supporting the population, which consists of 16,581 individuals; or, 2,983 families, living in 2,810 houses. The annual valuation of those houses, including a market town—but deducting one-third for repairs—amounts to 736*l.* 16*s.*

"In this parish there is one loan fund, one dispensary and fever hospital—the latter containing only three wards for fever patients.

"In the adjoining parish (Cloone) there is an area, including bog and water, of 41,516 statute acres, with a population of 21,225 individuals; or, 3,818 families, living in 3,669 houses. The annual valuation of which houses, including a market town—but deducting one-third for repairs—amounts to the sum of 221*l.* 18*s.*

"In this parish there is a loan fund; but there is no dispensary, or any charitable institution of any kind."

The returns given of the Mohill Union were of a remarkable character, and showed the extensive subdivision of land there. The occupiers who did not pay rates, or rather those whose holdings were valued at 4*l.* and under, amounted to 6,169, and the land in their possession was no less than 24,346 statute acres—in the Carrick Union—a fact no less extraordinary—while the number of those paying rates was 4,522; those not paying rates were 5,730: and, from those returns it would be seen, as regarded the latter locality, that 27,109 acres were altogether in the occupation of persons who did not pay rates, the rates in such cases being chargeable on the immediate lessor. With reference to that portion of the measure introduced by the right hon. Baronet relating to an alteration in the system of paying the police and the public county officers in Ireland, he desired some further information. His own conviction was, that nothing could be more necessary than that each county should pay for its own police, although the Commission of which Lord Devon had been the head, appointed to inquire into the relations between landlord and tenant in Ireland, had recommended a very different plan; one similar to that now proposed by the right hon. Baronet. To this, however, he would not object, provided that there should be an annual vote of the House for their payment; the number of police in each county determined on, and in the event of its being found necessary to increase that number in any particular locality, on account of disturbances, the charge for such extra police should be placed on the particular locality requiring their immediate services, and that the payments should be enforced as a punishment for such disorders. Some alteration was also absolutely necessary in the appointment of officers to conduct the Crown business at assizes; at present, nothing could be worse than the system so long existing; and until steps were taken by the Administration to insure fit and proper persons taking charge of this important business, neither justice nor order would be thoroughly introduced. Nor could there be any security for life, and property; and he regretted to say

that under the present system, the Crown gave very little protection to either. He was anxious that, before any great length of time elapsed, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government would turn his attention to this matter, with a view not only of relieving the counties of the burden of paying the salaries of public officers, but also for the purpose of putting the whole on a better footing, and placing men of talent and experience in the several offices. The general supposition in England was that Ireland was a lightly taxed country: the fact was that there was local taxation to an extent from 6 to 23 per cent.; and this, at all times a serious burden, was at this moment altogether insupportable, in consequence of the universal failure in the article of food having deprived the poorer part of the population of their usual means of meeting such taxation. He likewise trusted that in devising measures to allay that wide-spread evil, the right hon. Gentleman would not be unmindful of the many other funds from which relief might be derived, in addition to those which had already been mentioned on another night. There were large available resources in the guardianship of the Irish Reproductive Loan Society—a sum amounting, he believed, to upwards of 6,000*l.*, but at present in hand and lying useless; and in seeing that such funds were properly applied and diverted into the channels for which, by charitable persons, they were originally intended, the Government would be doing a very essential service. The original amount of these funds was about 54,000*l.*; they were now upwards of 64,000*l.*, and they might be made of infinitely greater service to the poor than in receiving them solely for loans. There were, it would be known, numerous other societies and associations formed with similar praiseworthy objects, and similarly, for want of proper inspection, failing in their end; and in order to secure to the unfortunate people so lamentably visited with famine all the relief which could possibly be obtained from such quarters, he hoped that a Committee of Inquiry would be formed, and that every facility would be given to carry out whatever recommendation might be adopted. The noble Lord, in conclusion, stated that he would give his support, with great pleasure, to the measure of the right hon. Baronet, and with still greater pleasure, if the suggestion of the noble Lord the Member for the city of London induced the right hon. Baronet to propose an immediate, in place of a gradual, repeal of the Corn Laws.

The MARQUESS of GRANBY said, that he rose under circumstances of very great and grave embarrassment, because he felt it to be his duty to oppose the course of those with whom he had generally acted. He must at the outset declare that he considered the question before them was one on which every one had a perfect right to change his opinion; and he would moreover say this, that he was sure that in the present course that was adopted by the right hon. Baronet he was actuated by the purest and most conscientious motives; but, at the same time, he must be allowed to say, that if the right hon. Gentleman had entertained these opinions in 1841, he did believe that though under such circumstances the right hon. Gentleman might have proposed the same measures which he now submitted to the House, with all the authority that his great talents gave him, still he would not have had the opportunity of proposing them with all the authority and influence of the Crown. Now, however, the right hon. Baronet felt it to be his duty to press these measures upon the House. He regretted that the right hon. Gentleman had done so; and he regretted it the more because, as far as they knew the opinions of the people of this country, their feelings and their wishes were against these measures. Measures were proposed to them, and they were called upon to meet the arguments by which such measures were supported. There was some difficulty in doing so, because they would find the propositions before the House sustained by the most contradictory arguments. The arguments themselves were as various as the persons to whom they were addressed; and there was some difficulty in knowing which argument should be encountered, and which fallacy first exposed. There was one argument which had lately prevailed very much, and seemed to have produced considerable effect throughout the country, and it was one which, if true in every respect, would, he admitted, have considerable effect upon himself. It was this: that if the Corn Laws were repealed the labourer could buy bread cheaper than he did at present. Now, this he did say, that if it were true that under such circumstances the labourer could get his bread and his subsistence cheaper, the Corn Laws could not be maintained. He thought, however, that this was not the question which a statesman should ask. The proper ques-

tion was, would the labourer receive more bread and more of subsistence if the Corn Laws were repealed, than he had now? He thought that all experience and all sound argument told them it would not be so. He referred to the statistics of all the nations of the world, and he thought from these that it was self-evident that when subsistence was very cheap, the labourer was not well paid, and the condition of the people was worse than in those places where the price of provisions was high. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War had last night told Members on that (the Ministerial) side of the House, that they deceived themselves on this question, because they alone judged of it from the inquiries that they made in their own neighbourhoods. In his mind, on the contrary, it appeared that this was the very best manner of obtaining an accurate estimate of public opinion and of the general judgment respecting them: for the Agricultural Members came from all parts of the country, and it seemed a strange argument to say that the opinions thus collected by them were not to be relied upon. They were, however, told, that all the experience they had had of the system of protection was to be set aside, and that the last three years' experience of the right hon. Gentleman's Tariff was that alone upon which they were to decide this great question. Three years' experience of the Tariff! Why, the Tariff was not a free-trade measure. As he understood that measure, its principle was to take off the duty on raw produce, for the purpose of benefiting our manufacturers, whilst it kept a moderate duty on all manufactured articles. He admitted there were two or three exceptions to this rule; but he thought the House would agree with him, that there were other causes in these cases operating to prevent a fall in the wages of labour than the right hon. Baronet's Tariff; and amongst them they could not but take into consideration the fact, that the extension of the railroad system had very much widened the labour market. With regard to the rise in the price of meat, that, he was of opinion, was more to be attributed to the disease in sheep than to the new Tariff; and he confessed he was somewhat surprised, after having heard the right hon. Baronet say that his Tariff proved that low prices and high wages were concomitant, that the right hon. Gentleman should tell his agricultural friends in this House that they had no occasion to be alarmed at the Tariff, inasmuch as prices, instead of being lowered, were actually higher. He did not believe that "cheap bread" would confer the benefit on the labouring part of the community that was anticipated. It seemed to him that the arguments of the free traders came to this—we wish to put a shilling into every man's pocket, and in order to do so we propose to take two shillings out of the pockets of half the population. But let them mark who would be the sufferers. The sufferers would be the hard-working, industrious, producing classes of the community; whereas those who would gain, would be the rich, idle, unproducing consumers. Even supposing that the cheap loaf would be of the advantage it was represented, still he would ask if there were any probability, when the Corn Law was repealed, that the low price would continue? Having admitted foreign grain into competition, the English agriculturist would be driven from the market; and, that accomplished, supposing that foreign Governments permitted the exportation to this country, which was unlikely, would the foreign grower allow the price to continue low? Railways had not been so long in use in this country but that he remembered what continually took place on the old roads. He could recollect the high fares which were charged for travelling by the old stage coaches, and the reduction which ensued upon starting rival conveyances; but the moment that one compelled another to stop running, that moment did the cheap fares cease. They were also told that the greatest benefit would be conferred on the manufacturers of the country by the adoption of the right hon. Baronet's measure; that we should thereby be enabled to exchange our manufacturing produce for the corn of other countries. It would be a great relief to his mind if he thought that such would be the case; but he was sorry to observe that the right hon. Gentleman seemed to hold out very faint hopes that foreign nations would reduce their tariffs. But even if they did, what would be the effect? We might, perhaps, increase our exports abroad; but in the same ratio as we admitted foreign corn, would our own soil go out of cultivation, and our home market be contracted. Then he would ask whether the habits, tastes, or means of the foreign agriculturist would enable him to consume so large a quantity of our manufactures? The annual value of our home manufactures was computed to be 150,000,000*l.*, whereas the exports

amounted to only 50,000,000*l.* Were they prepared to extend our foreign trade at the risk of destroying the home market? They had last year spent 1,000,000*l.* on our fortifications, and it was considered necessary, and they would this year be asked, to grant increased estimates for the public service; and he (the Marquess of Granby) wished to know if it was prudent or wise at this particular juncture, when clouds were rising on all sides, to put ourselves in the power of foreign nations, so far as the supply of food for our population was concerned? It was no answer to say that if one nation refused to send in the requisite supply, other nations would be ready to meet our demands. He believed that we should derive most of the supply from one particular part of the Continent; but even if that were not so, we all knew how easy it was for those who were jealous of our greatness to combine against us. It was upon the ground, then, that he felt it to be his duty to support those principles which he thought had mainly conduced to the greatness, the happiness, the welfare, and the independence of England, that he should give his most strenuous opposition to the measure of Her Majesty's Ministers. Before he sat down he was anxious to say a few words to those hon. Members who might be doubtful as to the course they should pursue on this occasion. If there were any hon. Members who had their confidence in the truth of the protective principle shaken by the conversion of their friends, he would beg of them to pause before they were drawn into the vortex of this revolution. If they did not see their way clearly before them, he would entreat of them to give the benefit of the doubt in their minds to a system which had existed for the last 200 years: he would beg of them to give it in favour of a system under which this nation had risen to its present greatness and renown. If he was told that he was too late, and that protection was doomed, his answer was, that he believed the protection was just; and although talent, and eloquence, and agitation, and money had been expended to delude them, the people of this country would only pity the men who had so bad an opinion of them as to suppose that the principles which their arguments had not changed, would yield to such corruption. Let the result be what it would, of this he was sure, that posterity would regard them (the protectionists) with gratitude, and thank them for having struggled for protection, and would at all events acknowledge that they had not betrayed the trust which the nation had confided to them.

Mr. GREGORY would give his support to the measure of the right hon. Baronet, which a very remarkable expression uttered some time previously by one high in authority had convinced him could not long be delayed. In the year 1843, it was asserted on the bench below him, that the principles of free trade were the principles of common sense. At that assertion, which conveyed to him a deep import, some hon. Gentlemen had shaken their hands, while others believed that the right hon. Secretary's words were to be taken in the words of Oxford theologians, in a non-natural sense. Common sense, however, appeared to him an ingredient that entered so largely into the reasoning of all the affairs of life, so mixed up and bound up with our slightest actions, as well as with our loftiest duties, so inseparable from what was just and right, that it became to him a subject of deep consideration, what could those causes be that prevented the principles of common sense from being fully carried out; and the more he examined the reasonings on either side of the question, the more satisfied and convinced was he that the right hon. Secretary was right in his assertion, and that those principles of free trade were, like common sense, no principle in the abstract, but principles which might and should be made applicable to immediate circumstances. Impressed with this conviction, he considered it his duty to vote with the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Hutt) in his Motion for the free importation of Australian corn; a Motion which had for its object the free importation of grain from all British dominions, and which would certainly have opened the door to a freer trade in corn. He regretted the Bill did not originally pass the same year as the Canada Corn Bill, as, in addition to its being a concession to our colonists (not a very important one, it was true), the right hon. Baronet might have quoted the effects of the measure along with the other calculations he employed to quiet the apprehensions of the agriculturists. He certainly did not conceive in those days that a free trade in corn was so near, and conceived that a small fixed duty, for the sake of revenue if not of protection, would have been the transition state, a proposition to which he would have lent a willing concurrence, being a believer that corn, as well as other articles of consumption, should be subject

to a slight taxation. As, however, from the harbour of the sliding-scale, we had at once put forth into the open sea of free trade, he saw no other inconvenience than the nausea which came upon the protection party at once, who would have had more time to prepare themselves for the sickness they considered inevitable, during a more gradual progress down the river. He expected, however, that they would find themselves better sailors than they imagined, and that their apprehensions, as in former instances of the Tariff and the Canada Corn Bill, would be their only source of suffering. He trusted it would not be imagined that, for an instant, he wished to employ the language of ridicule, which would be highly unbecoming towards what he must consider to be the most honest convictions. He believed that the situation of the labourer and the tenant-farmer, just as much as the rent, and what they conceived to be the honour of Parliament, entered deeply into the consideration of the opponents of this Bill; and how often had he been led to exclaim, was there not one Menenius Agrippa in the land to rebuke the angry and senseless recriminations that attended this discussion? Was there no friend of the manufacturer to speak to him of the English as well as of the foreign purchaser—of the home as well as of the foreign market—when he launched into invectives against the landed interest? And could no one in return remind the orators of protection meetings and agricultural societies, that commerce and manufactures had done more for agriculture, than agriculture for commerce and manufactures; and that England did not take her position among nations from her proficiency in subsoil draining and rotation crops, but from the wealth and greatness commerce and manufnctures had conferred upon her, which had enlarged her borders to the very corners of the earth, and preserved her integrity and independence when every hand was raised in hostility against her? He was anxious to detain the House as shortly as possible; but he thought it necessary, representing so large a constituency, to state briefly the reasons that induced him to give his support to the Government measure, and to show them that he was not merely influenced by the example of those with whom he had hitherto acted, or by any romantic notions of self-sacrifices or self-devotion. Seeing the daily and hourly conversions of men whose motives no insinuations could impugn, the more amply and dispassionately this question was discussed, the more clear would its necessity become, and it was most important for the efficiency of the measure and the honour of the House, that these Resolutions should appear in the eyes of the people of England a concession, not to clamour, but to reason. The grounds on which he gave his support to this measure were these—that he believed that agriculture had hitherto flourished, not through protection, but in spite of protection. He believed that with low prices there might be ample and equal remuneration. He believed that the present protective duties were an unjust tax upon the whole nation, a bounty on a particular manufacture, operating, as all bounties did, most perniciously to the interest of those for whom they were intended, creating and fostering supineness, and diverting capital from its legitimate channel by unnatural stimulus. He believed it to be a libel on the activity, intelligence, and skill of the British farmer to suppose him unable to compete with the foreigner in his particular manufacture. He believed the manufacturing and agricultural interests to be identical, and that restrictive laws on food were prejudicial to both. He believed that virtue and morality went hand in hand with plenty and prosperity; but that the attendants on scarcity were ignorance and crime. These were the positive reasons that induced him to support the measure, and he was not deterred by the arguments brought against it. He did not fear any more that England would be dependent on Foreign Powers for her food than she had hitherto been in years of scarcity, or that a general league would be made any more to starve her out, than that a general league would be formed for her invasion. He thought the argument of his noble Friend most important, which showed that even under the vigorous rule of Bonaparte, in the most desperate war that the nation was ever plunged in, so large an importation of corn was received from France; and he might add to that statement, that during that war, which was mainly concluded by the victories of the British navy, we were almost entirely dependent on the foreigner for the ropes and cordage of our vessels, for the hemp, in short, of Poland and of Russia, two hostile countries. It was said, again, that this was, and should not be, a concession to agitation. Now, he contended, that if ever there was a concession to reason, and not to agitation, this was of that nature. Look at the majority of the right hon.

Baronet in Parliament, and what a position he might have continued to hold had he, at the coming dissolution, placed himself at the head of prejudice, and appealed to the country on protection principles. Much as the hon. Member for Stockport and the League had done, they could not have carried this measure for several years without the intervention of external circumstances; yet how fearful those external circumstances might have been! The right hon. Baronet might have held on for several years, blessed by his supporters, the farmer's joy, his portrait adorning the village inn, and lighted up annually, bright and ruddy, by the flames of the village bonfire which consumed the letter and effigy of Lord John. Instead of that, he had chosen a time of all others the most fitted for this measure—a time of general prosperity, when no great quantity of corn was hoarded up abroad, and likely to inundate the country; and all he hoped was, that such might be the case in 1849. On the other side of the water, however, much alarm was felt by the intention of the hon. Member for Cork (Mr. O'Connell) to support the measure. It was quite clear, said many of his (Mr. Gregory's) supporters, that Mr. O'Connell's object was to destroy the tie that connected Ireland with England, and thereby advance his great object of Repeal. Now, considering that were this to be the effect of the measure, which presupposed the destruction of the Irish trade—much poverty must ensue, in fact, that country would be on the verge of pauperism — did they consider that hon. Gentleman so devoid of all sagacity as not to perceive that the contributions of a grateful people to him who carried Emancipation would be diminished altogether, and that, probably, the Repeal rent would be shortly *prorsus nil?* Would that tally with the hon. Member's views? But he gave that hon. and learned Gentleman and those who acted with him, credit for voting on this occasion from humane and enlightened considerations. Let them see what a position that hon. Gentleman could at once have occupied had he chosen to oppose the measure. Could anything be easier than to persuade nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Ireland, that they were on the verge of ruin? See what an effect a few sophistries and adroit calculations would have had on every class of the population—shoemakers, hatters, tabinet weavers, handloom linen weavers, and farmers, above all. Why, hardly five Representatives throughout Ireland would have been able to withstand the storm, and the fate of the measure would be easily conceived. It would have gained to the cause of Repeal, such a movement as this, more than half of Ireland, and not only that, but the ready and willing co-operation of all the free traders in this country, who would have been only too glad to have got rid, on any terms, of so many advocates of prejudice and protection. But it was said the present Bill was to displace capital, and throw land out of cultivation; let them, for one moment, deal with experience, and with those very stubborn things called facts. Let them see how the relaxation of protection in 1842 had affected land. Look at the prices of wheat for five years preceding the half year of 1842. What was the average? 65*s.* 2*d.*; since 1842 to 1845, 52*s.* 8*d.*; and what had been the result? You have been calculating at various times the remunerating price of corn to meet agricultural distress; in 1815, you placed it at 80*s.*; in 1827, Mr. Canning put it at 65*s.*; in 1842, Sir Robert Peel placed it at 56*s.*; and we find, since that period, 52*s.* 8*d.* the average price, and no general ruin. This was the scale:—

s.	d.		s.	d.	
1838...64	7		1842...57	3	half year.
1839...70	8		1843...50	1	
1840...66	4		1844...51	4	
1841...64	4		1845...52	0	
1842...60	2	half year.			

And what was the quantity of corn sold in the country markets?—

Year.	s.	d.	Quarters.
1839 wheat at	70	8	3,174,680
1842 „	57	3	4,091,234
1845 „	52	0	6,470,469

And yet, with constantly decreasing prices, you find your increase of corn more than double within six years. He was aware they had been abundant years; but it proved that low prices had not thrown land out of cultivation, but instead, had given rise to increased care, activity, and science. But he (Mr. Gregory) would not even allow that they had any right to make use of such an argument, even supposing it to be true. If the inferior lands were not remunerative, it was wrong thus to call on the community at large to pay a heavy tax for this direction of capital into an improper channel, any more than that they should pay annually a large sum of money to breeders of silk worms, or manufacturers of British brandy—in short, to undertakings repugnant to the climate and natural resources of the country. Such a system

as this was wrong, and opposed to the first principles of political economy. Let them look at France, and the wine trade of that country, for an example of the injurious effects of such a system of unnaturally diverting capital. Look at the enormous tax that country annually paid for her restrictive duties on hardware, iron, cotton, yarn, &c. Were she disposed to receive these articles from foreign countries, instead of unnaturally stimulating a dear and inferior home production, what a market would she at once open for her unrivalled wines, the cultivation of which annually occupied three millions of human beings, and might be correspondingly increased! He gave that as one instance out of a thousand to show the pernicious effects of stimulating that which was by nature unremunerative. Now he would again appeal to experience on another point which had excited very considerable alarm. He alluded to the impossibility of the English farmer being able to contend with foreign countries where taxation was light and labour cheap. On a very memorable occasion similar language was employed, and how had it been justified? In the year 1785, Mr. Pitt brought forward his noble and enlightened measure for commercial intercourse with Ireland. The same class of minds who now maintained that the English farmer could not contend against Danish boors and Polish serfs, maintained that English manufacturers would never be able to contend against Irish cheapness. Alarm rose high in the manufacturing districts: it was confidently asserted that it would be literally a transfer of English capital to Ireland. The manufacturers of Manchester remonstrated, but in vain; and we see how true was the quotation of the right hon. Baronet from Adam Smith, that the manufacturers had no objection even to monopoly. Mr. Wedgewood came from the Potteries, and remonstrated also. Sir W. Conyngham got up in that House, and stated that ruin stared Scotland in the face; for that the Irish would export their grain to the western parts of Scotland, undersell the Scotch farmer, and overthrow the landlord—and, not satisfied with ruining them on the land, the Irish fishermen would obtain dominion of the sea, by being allowed participation in the Scotch fishing trade. The Bill was defeated in the Irish House of Commons; but the Union was accomplished five years subsequently. The cheapness still remains, taxation was still comparatively light; but had one of these anticipations been verified? Had not skill, energy, and order prevailed over cheap labour and cheap food? And was it not only a few days since they were told that, in spite of Sir W. Conyngham's predictions, quantities of dried fish from Scotland were annually sent to Ireland, which was literally teeming with that gift of Providence. One of the great difficulties in the way of understanding this was the word "cheapness." Either the farmer must sell at low prices, and be ruined through cheap corn; or else, if corn was to remain high, why unsettle the question? Now with cheapness there might be equal remuneration. It should be recollected that the farmer and the landed interest were themselves paying a heavy price for these protective duties, the bread they daily consumed, provisions for their farm servants, grain for their cattle, oats for their horses. It was easy to perceive that not more than half the profit went into the pocket of the farmer. He was taxing himself heavily for that produce of which he was a great consumer. And as for the tenant farmer, of small capital, whose ruin was confidently predicted, he believed the steadiness of price and of demand would be more beneficial to him, than the present uncertain state of things. As these duties were now, he of all persons was least benefited by them. From want of capital he was obliged to sell his crops immediately on their being threshed out, whatever glut there might be in the market, while the real profits went into the pocket of the corn factor, and those who had the means to await the probable rise of prices in the fall of the year. Surely a fall of price, accompanied with greater steadiness of demand, and a more general cheapness of the articles of raiment, food, and luxury, would be more advantageous to the farmer than the present uncertain state of things, which at one moment buoyed him up into undertakings beyond his means; at another, reduced him to apathy and despair. Farming ought surely to be conducted on fixed principles of trade, instead of in the irregular manner by which it was now characterized. His belief, however, was, that prices would not be so very materially lowered, but that a more general knowledge would prevail abroad of the quantity that would be required for the English market, and that there would not be, as now, a glut, one year forcing ruinous and compulsory sales, at another time scarcity and high prices.

On the whole, therefore, he looked on this measure, as far as man could effect, as calculated to produce a greater steadiness of price and cheapness of food, yet with equal remuneration to the producer. The case was now altered, since the farmer, to use the words of the right hon. Baronet, might complain that every article he wore, from the sole of his shoe to the crown of his hat, was heavily taxed for the purposes of protection; that his hat, buttons, gloves, handkerchief — in short, everything required for domestic use, was taxed for the purpose of protection to manufactures. The manufacturer, having given up so much of his protection, might fairly ask the farmer for a similar concession. And now a few words with respect to the apprehensions prevailing in Ireland. They all recollected the panic of 1842, and the terrible influx of foreign provisions that was to swamp the Irish producer. As usual, apprehension was the worst that happened. Never was a fairer demand for our produce, or the producer more amply remunerated than he had been since that fatal measure. He (Mr. Gregory) entirely coincided with the right hon. Baronet, that the prosperity or depression of trade in the manufacturing districts was the main cause of the rise or fall of the price of provisions; and he was confident that the same pulsation existed in Ireland as in Manchester and Liverpool. If there were a brisk demand there for English manufactured goods, there would be a brisk demand and steady price here for Irish agricultural produce; and were he (Mr. Gregory) an Irish peasant he would pray rather for fresh openings for our commerce and manufactures, and for measures likely to promote these objects, than for all the prohibitory enactments that the utmost stretch of monopolizing fancy could suggest, which might indeed keep foreign provisions from our shores, but at the same time render our produce unmarketable and valueless. He should now look at the several causes for apprehension: oats, bacon, salt pork, butter, live cattle, linen, were, as they heard, to be so depreciated in value, that the producers had but one year, if so much, to survive impending ruin. To begin with oats: he had taken some pains to arrive at correct conclusions upon the subject. He had gone through the consular reports, the accounts of trade and navigation, and the more closely he had investigated the matter, the more satisfied was he, that with a little more activity and a little less slovenliness we could throw down the gauntlet to the foreigner on the score of price. Now he would take, as a remunerative price for oats in Ireland, 9*s.* 6*d.* per barrel, the barrel containing 14 stone of 14 lb., or 196lb. According to the calculation, through the medium of the bushel, the quarter was one barrel and a half: that would render the price of oats remunerative at 14*s.* 3*d.* Now, even with the charge of carriage added to that, he denied that the foreigner could undersell the Irish farmer. He took the price abroad of oats from the consular returns, looking only at the chief places from which any considerable importation might be expected; these were St. Petersburgh, Dantzic, Hamburgh, and Elsinore. These consular returns were corroborated by Mr. Meek, and by the subsequent statements of Mr. M'Culloch. This was the table:—

Places.	Price of Oats per quarter.	Freight per quarter.
	s. s.	s. d. s. d.
Hamburgh . .	11 to 16	2 6 to 5 0
Elsinore . .	12 " 15	3 6 " 5 0
Dantzic . .	12	3 6 " 4 0
St. Petersburgh	12 " 5	4 5 " 5 0

Now he was aware that the freight of oats was somewhat less than this scale of freightage; but there was to be added to all this insurance, granary rent, commission on sale, and, above all, merchant's profit; and could it be conceived, that unless some extraordinary change took place, which change, however, was not likely to verge towards cheapness of price, presuming increase of demand, that there was any chance of Ireland being swamped by the foreign producer? One word, and only one, for Odessa, which had long been a sad bugbear. The freight from that port amounted to from 10*s.* to 15*s.* per quarter. Was it likely that oats could be conveyed from the interior to that port, and shipped free on board, at 2*s.* or 3*s.* a quarter, with remuneration to the producer? Now he was quite aware of what would be said to him: —"If all these calculations of grain be correct, how comes it that oats have been imported into England, paying an average duty for the last three years of 6*s.*?" That was the very point at which he was anxious to arrive, as it would show the fallacies that were employed to raise apprehensions, and how easily they might be met. He did not deny but that oats might be imported by return vessels at almost nominal freights, such as in coal vessels from Den-

mark, as instanced by his right hon. Friend the Recorder for Dublin, in the debate of 1842, or that some extraordinary cheap ship loads of wheat might occasionally arrive, as in one or two cases in 1837 from Odessa; but these very instances told against the general argument, proving that these low prices were extraordinary, and that the arrivals were so small as not in the slightest degree to affect the general market. Now, what had been the total amount of foreign oats imported at this average duty of 6*s.*? He would take the returns since April 29, 1842, to January 5, 1845, and he found this return:—Since the 29th of April, 1842, to the 5th of January, 1846, he found 578,462 quarters of foreign oats introduced, 2,875 quarters of colonial oats—581,387 quarters of foreign and colonial oats in all. Out of this, 348 quarters of colonial oats inundated the market, paying 1*s.* 6*d.* duty. This was the total amount of oats that had come into England during this period; and what had Ireland sent in the same time?—5,322,637 quarters. So much for figures; and he really thought such figures as these, and the returns of men whose reports were above suspicion, and who had passed their lives in continual intercourse with those best informed on the subject, ought to overbalance the statements of anonymous gentlemen who had lived in Poland. These anonymous gentlemen ought to reflect before they excited apprehensions, of which facts and experience were daily showing the utter groundlessness. Now, he would ask, was the foreigner, with these figures before him, likely to enter into what must be to him a most ruinous competition? Was it likely that he would at all, in any material degree, be able to send in such a quantity of oats as would swamp the Irish producer, when he was quite able to send in a more valuable and not more bulky commodity, far more remunerative, at nearly the same freightage and general expenses? Now for live stock:—he found, that from the 9th of January, 1842, to the 5th of January, 1845, the introduction of cattle amounted to 7,980 oxen and bulls, 3,645 sheep, and 1,042 pigs. So much for the threatened invasion of 300,000,000 of swine from one country. He was perfectly aware that of late the importation was much greater of oxen; but they should look at the immense—the really most unfair—price of meat at present. The prices at Balinasloe fair were unprecedented, and the demand far greater than the supply. He might be told that this arose not from increased consumption, but from the great mortality of late among cattle: but that told all the stronger in favour of his argument. If with these immense prices you ransack Europe to find cattle for the English market, and the quantity imported was a mere nothing in that market, what chance was there that, with a decreased price of meat, there would not be, as ever, the same call upon the Irish grazier? Could any remark be more rational than that of the right hon. Secretary for the Colonies, in his pamphlet on the Tariff, when he said—

> "The new Tariff is responsible for the addition of 3,000 head to the supply (this was published in March, 1845), but commercial distress, affecting, perhaps, immediately 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 of people, nearly all of whom were consumers of animal food, is responsible for not extending the demand to an amount nearer 300,000 head than 3,000."

These were very true words, and he wished Irish Members who opposed this measure would weigh them well; but if any fear remained, he would refer them to the price of meat in the different countries abroad visited by Mr. Meek, and ask if we could successfully compete with such prices. Now, for salt pork. By the Tariff of 1842, from being 12*s.* per cwt., it was admitted from British possessions at 2*s.* per cwt.; other parts 8*s.* per cwt. He had looked over the amount of this article imported during the last five years, and found, in spite of the relaxation of duty, and the greater consumption of animal food, a most insignificant increase. Salt pork imported in 1841, 45,000 cwt.; in 1842, 54,000 cwt.; in 1843, 27,000 cwt.; in 1844, 11,000 cwt. for seven months ending August 5; in 1845, 27,000 cwt. for seven months ending August 5; out of this portion the quantity entered for home consumption had decreased. He would take the first seven months of the last three years:—Salt pork entered for home consumption in 1843, 3,000 cwt.; in 1844, 600 cwt.; in 1845, 1,100 cwt.; showing that in spite of high prices there was no advantage taken of the relaxation. Hon. Members should also recollect what was all-important in the consideration of this subject, that the remaining quantity was taken out of bond for our shipping duty free, and that in that respect there could not and would not be the slightest change. We had had, as far as shipping was concerned, where salt meat was so largely required, a free trade for several years; and what a fraction of the whole quantity thus used was the produce of the

foreigner! Next were bacon and hams; from 1*l.* 8*s.* per cwt., the duty was reduced by the Tariff of 1842 to 3*s.* 6*d.* from British possessions, other parts 14*s.* Just half was the immediate increase. Bacon and hams imported in 1841, 5,000 cwt.; 1842, 8,000 cwt.; 1843, 7,000 cwt. Bacon imported in the seven months ending the 5th of August, 1843, 354 cwt.; 1844, 20 cwt.; 1845, 18 cwt. Hams imported in the seven months ending the 5th of August, 1843, 4,313 cwt.; 1844, 4,212 cwt.; 1845, 3,363 cwt. This looked as if the pig would still pay the rent. The fact was, as long as the manufacturer had the money to pay, he would prefer a good and wholesome to an inferior article, which foreign salt meat had proved itself to be. Foreign beef—Seven months ending August 5:—Imported, 1843, 19,621 cwt.; 1844, 63,950 cwt.; 1845, 53,759 cwt. Entered for home consumption—1843, 541 cwt.; 1844, 527 cwt.; 1845, 679 cwt. Now there was only butter remaining; and any one who had read Mr. Meek's statement, must see that the price of that commodity in exporting countries nearly equalled that which was considered a most remunerative price in Ireland; and that it was impossible that any quantities were likely to be imported calculated in any other way to affect the Irish dairy farmer than to encourage him to greater cleanliness and attention, the want of which at present deteriorated materially from the value of that article. And here he was glad to remark that the dairy farmer, instead of being ruined since the Tariff, had been able to increase his exports. He (Mr. Gregory) found exported—

Years.	Butter & Cheese.	Value.
	Cwt.	£.
1841	55,000	223,000
1842	61,000	229,000
1843	71,000	253,000

Chiefly to Portugal and Brazil. Now, with all these accumulations of facts and figures, should he not be most unwise in joining in the general cry of apprehension? He knew he had trespassed sadly on the indulgence of the House; but it was a matter of such moment to let reason take the place of groundless fear, that he was confident he should not be blamed. Feeling then deeply that this was a highly beneficial measure, adding stimulus to commerce and to trade, having gone through every calculation most fairly to prove the groundlessness of agricultural apprehension in Ireland, should he be justified, as a Member for a great city—a city that should be a great commercial city—in withholding his support to a measure calculated, as he believed, eminently to increase the mercantile activity of Dublin? What a painful sight it was to him, crossing from Liverpool to Dublin, to see the contrast of the scene! On one side, all energy and life moving on the waters; wealth pouring in by 10,000 arteries into the great heart of England. On the other, the most noble bay in our possessions, free from shifting sands and natural obstructions, and yet only dotted by the sail of the fisherman or the pleasure boat. He confessed that, in addition to the reasons he had adduced, the character which the right hon. Baronet had hitherto maintained for great knowledge and abilities in financial and commercial matters, had had no small share, he would not say in bringing him to these opinions, but, at all events, in confirming them. There might be all the difference in the world as to his present measures: there could be no difference of opinion as to the success that had marked his previous schemes. Apprehensions of an untried future would not warrant their kicking down that edifice his past career had raised. They were bound to give him the credit he had received from an hon. Member most hostile to his measures, and consider him in his (Mr. Colquhoun's) words, "up to this time, as a Minister of Finance eminently deserving of public confidence, whose plans had been marked by indisputable success, the result of a conduct sagacious and prudent." Putting, then, all considerations of honour on one side, without entering into the question of the propriety or the impropriety of the right hon. Baronet being the Minister who introduced this measure, they were, at all events, in one sense, bound to listen with respect to his appeal to posterity. Had the concluding day of the last Session of Parliament been his last, what would have been the verdict of posterity? That he had found his country in a financial crisis—he had left her unembarrassed; that he had found a disaffected and almost pauper manufacturing population—he had left them loyal and employed. Could any reflecting man, however hostile to the right hon. Baronet, however indignant with his measure—imagine that, in order to avoid a temporary inconvenience, in order to put down a clamorous association, or even to hold the reins of government

some short space longer, the right hon. Baronet could find it in his heart to throw to the winds all the debt his country owed him, and, by plunging her into a crude and dangerous scheme, forfeit all his credit as a statesman? But the right hon. Baronet was taunted with resisting these opinions for many years, and with at once yielding to them when there was the least apparent necessity for concession. It was perfectly true that, as far as argument went, there was nothing to prevent this measure from being carried in 1842. The *à priori* reasonings of the hon. Member for Stockport were even then, in his mind, perfectly irresistible; and he never heard or read a speech of that hon. Gentleman which received a satisfactory reply within the House or out of it. But they had then derived no benefit from experience: the great experiments of the last three years were then untried; the signal success that crowned them was undreamed of. The hon. Member for Stockport had unquestionably reaped imperishable fame from the talent and energy he had displayed in this controversy; but would it have been wise or right to yield to *à priori* arguments—interested *à priori* arguments—until those arguments had had their foundation based upon experience? The House well knew that *à priori* arguments were far from infallible; they might remember when arguments of that nature had been employed to prove the impossibility of steam traffic with America; and if those arguments and deductions of the mathematician were disproved by experience, how much less reliance could be placed on those employed by the politician, whose subject-matter was so infinitely more uncertain, so biassed by various and complex considerations? But they should look to the state of parties, and see how opinions were balanced on this subject. In the terms of the advocates of this measure they had a guarantee for its wisdom and necessity. Look what names on that side of the House had declared against protection. The right hon. Baronet, the introducer of the measure; the Secretary of State for the Home Department, himself no mean political economist, and who on the present occasion remarkably confirmed the old saying, that first thoughts were best; the Secretary for the Colonies. Look also to the other side—the noble Lord the Member for London; the Member for Edinburgh—all advocates for free trade. Look to the Upper House, where they found Lord Grey on one side; Lord Talbot, essentially Conservative, and the largest practical farmer in England, adopting the same conclusions. Look out of doors, and they had the concurrence of the greatest thinkers and writers on the subject. They could not resist such arguments as that. Even if the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) stood single and solitary, his opinion on a commercial and financial measure of that nature would be deserving of the deepest consideration. The opinions of men who had applied their minds to the study of these most intricate questions should be listened to with even more than deference. They were not so much questions of conscience, on which all should have a right of private judgment, but questions determinable by intellect and inquiry. Long habit gave men, in questions of that nature, almost an intuitive knowledge. That was the language of Galileo to the inquisitors who visited him in his prison, to reason with him on his adoption of a planetary system so repugnant to conceived notions. "You can see nothing," said he, "in this dark cell, while my eyes, accustomed to the gloom, can perceive the smallest object. Even so your minds cannot yet receive those great truths which, though veiled in darkness to you, are to me, from long and painful thought, clear as the daylight." Fortified by such authorities, backed and strengthened by the greatest thinkers of mankind, seeing fresh recruits daily pouring into the camp of liberty of commerce, which had, as yet, not to lament one solitary desertion, he confessed he was not terrified by the prophecy of a daily journal, that, before many years, the name of a free trader would be a byword and a shame, so disastrous would be the effects of the Government policy. He did think, without ascribing a long span of life to any then present, that the advocates of the Bill would outlive popular, ay, and even agricultural execration. He did not think they would hereafter wander to and fro in lone places, saying each man to himself—

"Throughout all Troy I see no friendly eye,
"And Trojans shudder as they pass me by!"

And now, let us look for one moment at this question apart from considerations of mere pounds, shillings, and pence. Look at the state of Ireland at this moment—on the very brink of famine! The inhabitants of that country had ever manifested a most extraordinary and happy contrast between the manner in which they received the ordinances of man, and the visitations of Providence. Meek, patient, and resigned,

they had shared with one another their last handful of outmeal, and then bowed themselves humbly beneath the chastisement of Heaven. What had happened to the Irish might any day happen to them. But would the population of England preserve the same deportment? Remember 1842. Put no impossible or even improbable case; picture to themselves great commercial depression and great scarcity, arising at one and the same time. There might be far worse times in store for them than 1842. They might come as suddenly upon them as that plague that had invaded Ireland. What position would those be in who were in those days the Government of the country? Could the starving operative be told that all that a wise, enlightened, and humane Legislature could effect had been done? Pass this measure and they might say that to him. Preserve their restriction upon the people's food, and then preach resignation, if they dared, to an angry and terrified nation. They might lecture them from blue books and overwhelm them with figures; they might tell them undeniable truth, that corn-growing countries lay between the 45th and 55th degree of latitude, and that, subject as they were to the same variations of weather, the same scarcity prevailed elsewhere, and that Corn Laws added nothing to their hunger. That would not do. They would never drive it from them, but that, smitten as they were by the heavy hand of God, they had, in addition, crushed them with the iron hand of man. Do not imagine that because the machinery of Government now works easily, nothing can arise to jar or clog its movement. The mechanism might still run smooth, and all go well; but such smoothness was sometimes the smoothness of that which was worn out. As for himself, his humble but hearty support should be given to that measure in all its stages. He well knew the price he had to pay by so doing. He knew that he should alienate the confidence of many with whom he had hitherto been long and happily connected. He would not say he was regardless of these considerations; but he was fortified by the conviction that he was acting honestly and for the best; he thought he was doing what he ought to do; and he was not without hopes that the confidence of such friends as he might have alienated by his vote, would not be entirely and for ever lost; but though at present cast upon the waters, the results of this measure, being the increased happiness, prosperity, and virtue of the nation, might bring back that confidence to him again before the lapse of many days.

Lord BROOKE said, that, in rising to address a few words to the House upon this question, he might be permitted to ask for, and hope to obtain, that indulgence which the House was always ready to concede to any Member who addressed it for the first time. Still he could not but feel great diffidence in offering his own opinion in opposition to that of men so vastly his superiors in talent and in experience. He had formed, however, an honest and unbiassed opinion, which, as the Representative of a great and important constituency, he trusted, might have some weight in the House. He did not rise for the purpose of entering deeply into this great question: he would glance only at the general features of the discussion, and would briefly state the reasons which had influenced his vote upon the present occasion, and he would therefore pass over the details referred to by the hon. Member for Dublin. He confessed that he felt great regret, on entering Parliament, to find himself compelled to vote contrary to the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Ministers. Nothing would have given him greater satisfaction and pleasure than to have tendered to that right hon. Baronet his hearty support; but the change which had taken place in the right hon. Gentleman's opinion—and an honest change, he admitted it to be—would not permit him to follow the right hon. Gentleman in the course now adopted. Although he was willing to give credit to the right hon. Baronet, as well as to those who supported him, yet he felt that many of those supporters could not lay claim to the same straightforward course of action which he was willing to concede to the right hon. Baronet himself. The right hon. Baronet had been for some few years changing his principles; but he had taken care to keep from the House and from his own party a knowledge of that change. Those, however, who had followed him in this course had altered most suddenly, he might almost say miraculously; and the House might have been at a loss to account for that change, had they not heard the speech last night of the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool. There, indeed, they could find the reasons which had induced the right hon. Baronet's party to support him. They found that his supporters did not approve of the measure now before Parliament; but they feared they should lose his great

talents and his high genius for conducting the Government of this country. But if any man were convinced that those measures were injurious to the interests of this country, no personal considerations ought to induce him to vote for those measures contrary to the pledges he had made to his constituents—contrary to the pledges he ought to have made to himself. The only excuse he could himself find for the right hon. Gentleman's followers was, that the present Parliament was near its dissolution. They all knew that when a man arrived at a great age he lost his faculties, and that his memory failed him. Here they had a sad example of the memory failing, and of the present Parliament forgetting the pledges of its youth and manhood, amidst the decrepitude of old age. Members were called upon by the right hon. Baronet to make their wills, to assign away their property and possessions, to give them to aliens and to foreigners, and so to defraud their rightful heirs. He would not say, that they were passing this measure with any good will, but they were forced on by the right hon. Baronet, who was thus dealing with an antiquated Parliament, because he knew that he could not so deal with a Parliament fresh from its pledges to the country. He would vote with the right hon. Baronet, if he thought that famine was overhanging the land, or if there was any great impending evil which this measure might avert; but he felt that there was no such threatening danger, and that the present enactment, instead of relieving, would do injury to the people. The most that they saw, were the evils arising from the state of the potato crop; but those evils might have been removed by opening the ports, instead of the sweeping measures now before them. They had heard of the great reductions which had been made in the import duties, and they had been told, that notwithstanding these reductions, there was no deficiency in the revenue. This of itself proved that an enormous increase of imports must have come into this land; and though they were told that the exports had been increasing, yet the change must have been injurious to native industry, unless the exports had increased in an equal or greater proportion than the imports. But even were this proved to be the case, he could conceive that great and important interests might still be injured, for it by no means followed that the same classes which were injured by the imports would be benefited by the exports. Another subject had been brought forward connected with this question, relative to the cultivation of the land; and the hon. Member who seconded the Address saw no limits to the resources of this country. He knew that in many parts of the country the produce, and the quantity of land cultivated, had increased, and might still increase; but not enough to enable us to cope with nations unprotected. The right hon. Member the Secretary at War had asked, "Where was the nation that could contend with us?" He could not believe that there were no countries to send us large supplies. If they crossed from the north of Europe into Spain, they would see countries on all sides who would be ready, if this measure were passed, to enter into a competition with us; and he must look on such competition with dread, as this was a system of free import, not free trade, and the right hon. Baronet had no guarantee from foreign nations of their co-operation. He also foresaw great danger likely to accrue to this country in time of war; he could conceive a position in which we might be placed, which, even if we were assisted by our enemies, would be most degrading. We ought not to be left to the generosity of an enemy to feed a starving population: that was a situation in which, as he conceived, no Englishman would wish to see his country placed. The right hon. Baronet had said, that the burdens on land were a matter of justice, and not of policy, and might be settled by some compensation; but the only promise of remuneration he could find, was in the speech of the noble Lord who moved the Address (Lord F. Egerton). That noble Lord said, that the agriculturists would reap such advantages from the adjustment of this great question, whatever it might be, that their remuneration would be ample; and this was the only compensation he could see in the present proposal. He and his friends were accused of being parties to the continuance of this agitation. He denied the charge which placed him on the same footing with the agitation of the Anti-Corn-Law League. His object was to preserve: theirs to pull down and destroy. If any one would look at the actions of the League, and saw how they carried on their proceedings, he could not but be struck with the chicanery, the bribery, and the perjury by which their designs were carried out. He would not enter into particulars upon these points; but he would say that, although

these charges were strong, they could be proved. The Anti-Corn-Law League had also unduly interfered with the franchise of the people. The vote of an honest man (as good as that of any Member of that House) might be objected to by men paid for the purpose, and unless he came forward and defended his vote before the revising barrister, he would be struck off. The man so objected to had to leave his home, and to travel, perhaps, a great distance to defend his vote; and if the objection were of no avail, the compensation given by the barrister was so small, that it was no remuneration to the voter for his trouble and loss of time. The actions of the Anti-Corn-Law League could not, in his opinion, be supported. There was only one more point to which he wished to refer before he sat down. It was to that part of the address of the noble Lord the Member for London, which stated that the present system carried with it fever, disease, and mortality throughout the land; and in which he spoke of the rate of mortality increasing with the price of corn. By taking the years from 1780 to 1830, and ascertaining the average deaths in every million of the population, he found a very different result. By dividing that half century into periods of ten years, he found that in the first ten years, when the price of corn was low, there was an increase of 152 deaths above the average when corn was moderate. In the second period of ten years there were the same results, an increased mortality of 375 more when corn was at low price, than when it was moderate. In the third period there were 1,678 more deaths when corn was low in price, than when it was moderate; in the fourth period the numbers of deaths was 501 more when corn was low; and in the fifth period there were 109 deaths more when corn was low; so that during all that period of half a century there were 2,815 more deaths on the average with a low price of wheat, than with a moderate price. He would not longer detain the House; he had only to thank them for the kindness with which they had heard him, and to apologize for the very inefficient way in which he had performed his duty. He entertained honest and conscientious feelings upon this subject; he could not as the Member for a large constituency consent to give a silent vote, without expressing those feelings.

Lord WORSLEY could assure the noble Lord who last spoke that he did not intentionally stand in his way when the noble Lord rose to address the House, as he was not aware, at the time, that he was a new Member; for, if he had been, he would instantly have given way. He was anxious to address the House on this question; for, although it had frequently engaged the attention of the House, it had never before assumed its present shape; for it was no longer to be treated as an abstract question, but as one brought forward by the Government on the ground of expediency, and not by them because they thought it right and just, but because, under the peculiar circumstances of the country, they thought it necessary. He would state shortly, with the permission of the House, why he thought they were wrong in the course which they had taken, and also what he believed to be the opinion of the agricultural districts, which had been induced to look to the present Government as composed of their friends. He thought that it could not be denied, that if one placard was seen more than another during the last election, it was, "Peel, the farmer's friend." If he mentioned this, he must be excused on the ground that, because he would not join in a vote of want of confidence directed against the last Administration, which proposed a fixed duty of 8*s.* on foreign wheat, a strong opposition was raised against him in the county which he represented, and his late Colleague (Mr. Handley) was ousted from his seat in consequence of its having been supposed that, from his having supported the late Government—although he had opposed their measures respecting corn—that he prevented the right hon. Baronet coming into power, who was regarded as the protector of the farmers. This was the opinion of a large portion of the constituency of the country, and he was not surprised at it, after the speeches made by the right hon. Baronet before he came into office. He was rather surprised at one part of the speech of his right hon. Friend (Mr. Sidney Herbert) last night. His right hon. Friend said—

"He thought the practical agriculturists of this country were not to be frightened from their propriety by alarms founded upon delusion and fear. Fear, he must say, was scarcely creditable to those who had the means of looking into this question, and who knew that with our spirit, skill, and capital, no country could compete with us."

Now, when they were told that it was not creditable to fear that the skill and capital of the country could not successfully compete

with other countries, his right hon. Friend should recollect that they had been excited to entertain these fears by the language of men of much greater experience than themselves in that House. What, he would ask, so lately as 1839, was the language which the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government made use of, on a Motion being made in that House for a total repeal of the Corn Laws? The right hon. Baronet said—

"Could you prove to us that the true principles of mercantile dealing required us to purchase corn in the cheapest market, and to withdraw the capital which has fertilised the inferior soils of this country, for the purpose of applying it to the rich but unprofitable wastes of Poland—still we should hesitate. We should remember with pain the cheerful smiling prospects which were thus to be obscured. We should view with regret cultivation receding from the hill top, which it has climbed under the influence of protection, and from which it surveys with joy the progress of successful toil. If you convinced us that your most sanguine hopes would be realized—that this country would become the workshop of the world—would blight, through the cheapness of food, and the demand for foreign corn, the manufacturing industry of every other country—would present the dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns connected by railways, intersecting the abandoned tracts which it was no longer profitable to cultivate; we should not forget, amid all these presages of complete happiness, that it has been under the influence of protection to agriculture, continued for two hundred years, that the fen has been drained, the wild heath reclaimed, the health of a whole people improved, their life prolonged, and all this not at the expense of manufacturing prosperity, but concurrently with its wonderful advancement. If you had called on us to abandon this protection with all the authority of an united Administration, with the exhibition of superior sagacity and triumphant reasoning, we should have been deaf to your appeal; but when, inviting us to follow you, you present nothing but distracted Councils, conflicting Colleagues, statements of facts not to be reconciled, and arguments leading to opposite conclusions, then we peremptorily refuse to surrender our judgments to your guidance, and to throw the protection secured to agriculture by the existing law into the lottery of legislation, in the faint hope that we might by chance draw the prize of a better Corn Bill."

This was the language of the right hon. Gentleman now at the head of a united Administration, and who asked them to support him for that very object. The right hon. Secretary for the Home Department stated also opinions which showed, to quote the language of my right hon. Friend, that "those fears, which were not creditable to us," were not confined to a small body, but that not long ago they were entertained by men of great experience, and who used such language as this, by which the people of this country were taught that there was something to fear. The right hon. Baronet on that occasion said—

"Oh! let the House well reflect before they took any step which directly or indirectly tended to these displacements of labour. Little did they know the suffering and the sorrow which lay hid beneath these quietly flowing waters. Little could they estimate the wretchedness which sprang from change of habit, of house, of manners, of the mode of life itself. What change more cruel could despotism itself inflict than a change from 'the breezy call of incense-breathing morn' to a painful and grievous obedience to the sad sound of the factory bell—the relinquishment of the thatched cottage, the blooming garden, and the village green, for the foul garret, or the dark cellar of the crowded city—the enjoyment of the rural walk of the innocent rustic Sabbath, for the debauchery, the temptations, the pestilence, the sorrows, and the sins of a congregated multitude? Where were their moralists, that their voices were not raised against the fearful consequences which the proposed change brought in its train? Talk to him of sending the Poles to Siberia, or the Hill Coolies from the Coromandel to the Mauritius; the authors of the intended change contemplated the perpetration, within the limits of their native land, of a cruelty far more atrocious. It was the first step towards making England, the workshop of the world, dependent for its daily food upon continental supplies. He hoped that the proposition would not be successful. Were it to succeed, he should say, with his Friend Lord Ashburton, that this was the last country which he should wish to inhabit. The evil itself was of the most fearful character; but the next worse thing to its actual infliction, was the apprehension of its advent—the fear of the change was almost as distressing as the actual change itself; he, therefore, could not hesitate to give his cordial and decided opposition to the Motion."

[*The reading of this passage produced continued cheers and great laughter throughout.*] Perhaps it might be said, that it was not quite fair to take expressions uttered four or five years ago, when it was understood that the opinion of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government on this subject had not undergone change until about three years ago. When, however, they were told of this change of opinion three years ago, they should recollect, that about that period it was thought right by the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government to bring forward a measure, which he said was for the adjustment of the corn question. He brought forward his measure, which took the country by surprise; but then it was to settle the question. Parliament had been dissolved, and it was supposed that a majority of that House was composed of those who would resist all further change in the Corn Laws. Some of those who gained seats in the House did so, not perhaps by a positive pledge on the subject; but it was doubtless understood by those who returned them that they would resist

all change; but they were so convinced by the arguments of the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues that some modification of the Corn Laws should take place, so as to put a stop to the cry for a total repeal, that they supported him, and ran the risk of disobliging their constituents. The measure was successful; but what was the result? Why, it became an encouragement to the right hon. Baronet to proceed. The right hon. Gentlemen said the other day, that he thought it right to go on in the same direction; and he (Lord Worsley) understood him to say, in the speech which he made at the opening of the Session, that one of his reasons for doing so was, the encouragement he had met with before. He understood the right hon. Baronet, by this expression, to mean, that the support he had received in that House had worked upon him in such a manner as to encourage him to propose further changes. He understood the right hon. Gentleman, on the first day of the Session, to state, that three years ago his opinion on this subject was very much shaken; and he also understood his noble Friend (Lord Lincoln) to say, in his letter to the electors of Nottinghamshire, that about three years ago his opinion had been shaken. But, then, the speeches made induced Members to oppose any proposition for repeal; and he could not do better than ask the House to allow him to read extracts from the arguments used just three years ago, which would show that then it was not thought discreditable to entertain fears of the effects of a total repeal. But then it might be said, that compensation was proposed for total repeal. The right hon. Gentleman had said, that the arrangement which he proposed would give certain relief to agriculture; but he did not understand the right hon. Baronet to say that he proposed it in the shape of compensation, but that he proposed the change in consequence of the inequality of the taxation in the land: he therefore might have proposed it without having made any reference to a repeal of the Corn Laws. And he would beg to remark, that the alteration which they now proposed was not by any means likely to be a settlement of the question. They might say, that at the end of three years the present measure would produce a settlement of this question; but he would, with due submission, argue that such was not likely to be the case, because before three years came round—delay it as long as they wished—there must be a general election; and did they believe that the farmers of England, whom they told three years ago that it was not discreditable to fear the result of a total repeal of the Corn Laws, would not, from one end of the country to the other, ask those whom they selected to be their Representatives, not only to resist a total repeal of the Corn Laws in 1849, but to endeavour to get such relief from unequal taxation, independently of the question of Corn Laws altogether, and also to re-establish the protection which they had heretofore enjoyed under the Corn Law? The farmers would not, therefore, be likely to look upon the present measure as being at all a final settlement of the question. He thought it very unfortunate that Her Majesty's Ministers should have chosen the period which they had selected, for that very reason. If Parliament were required to alter the Corn Laws, let it be done in such a way as would not keep the country in this perpetual warfare. Let the House decide, ay or no, for an alteration, or else let them settle the question finally; but by leaving the matter in the state in which it would be placed by this measure, with a probability of having it again discussed in three years, they would keep up a hope on the part of the farmers, that before that time arrived a differently constituted Parliament might be elected, which would be disposed to do them justice. And was it unreasonable that the tenant-farmers should recollect the language used by the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government in the debate of February, 1842? When the right hon. Baronet introduced his plan for an adjustment of the Corn Laws in that month, he expressed himself as follows:—

"The hon. and learned Gentleman would find it easy, it seems, to apply the great principle of free trade to this question; but I am compelled to look to the weighty interests that have grown up under the system of restriction. You the hon. and learned Member give me an estimate of the corn grown in this country; you tell me of 22,000,000 quarters of wheat, and in all 45,000,000 quarters of grain. Now, think of the amount of capital engaged in the production of that enormous quantity of 45,000,000 quarters of grain. Think what pecuniary interests must be involved in the production of such an amount of grain. Think, too, of the amount of social interests, connected with those pecuniary interests, which are also involved; how many families are depending for their subsistence and their comforts upon the means of giving employment to thousands, before you hastily disturb the laws which determine the application of capital. All these considerations you may disregard or overlook in your haste to apply the principles of free trade; but let me tell you, if you do so, you are the real enemies of the application of those principles. If

you disregard those pecuniary and social interests which have grown up under that protection which has long been continued by law, then a sense of injustice will be aroused, which will revolt at your scheme of improvement, however conformable it may be to rigid principle. How many leases have been formed under the existing system—under the faith of these laws? Take the case, even of the tenant-at-will, and how can you instil into him the idea that it is a landlord's question, and not a tenant's question? His capital is embarked in agriculture. Do you think it possible not strongly to affect that capital by pouring in millions of quarters of corn duty-free, diminishing his means in the same degree that you diminish the price of corn in the home market? Do you think you can safely disregard the position in which the tenant-at-will even would be placed by the adoption of your free-trade principles? But, in the case of the farmer who is under a lease on the faith of the endurance of your Acts of Parliament, what would you do? If the laws have been defective, that is not his fault. If for 140 years you have continued the protection to agriculture, is it possible lightly to regard the interests which have grown up under it?"

When such language as that had been used so lately by a person of the high standing of the right hon. Baronet; when it was given out by the Prime Minister of this country, that there was such danger in free trade, and that the farmers of England would be so seriously injured by it, was it, he would ask, surprising that they should find his noble Friend the Member for Sussex, who moved the Address in that House when the right hon. Baronet first took office, and who then stated that it was his wish that the duty of settling the Corn Law should devolve on the right hon. Baronet, and not on the noble Lord the Member for the city of London, declaring, as he had done a few nights ago, that he would give his most persevering opposition to the measure of the right hon. Baronet? Was it surprising that they should find hon. Members on that (the Ministerial) side of the House, declaring that they considered the right hon. Gentleman had betrayed them? Now, there was no person in that House who had felt it to be his duty to oppose the measures of the right hon. Baronet more strenuously than he opposed them; but he trusted that he had always opposed them in a manner becoming the position which he occupied as a Member of that House. He had never made use of violent expressions, and he had never joined with those who were in the habit of using them; but this he must, notwithstanding, be allowed to say, that he thought it to be a most serious matter to see a person occupying the position of the right hon. Gentleman in that House, after using such language when he proposed a measure for the adjustment of the Corn Laws three years ago, now coming down and stating that, because there existed a temporary evil—an evil, the existence of which nobody could deny, and which no one could deplore more sincerely than he did, but which was still one merely of a temporary nature—that they were to have a free trade in corn for ever, because they happened to have a scarcity of potatoes in the country now. He believed that other measures might have been brought forward—that other remedies for the existing evil might have been proposed and carried, without resorting to such a sweeping alteration. They might be able to carry this measure; but, as he had before said, it could not be considered as a final settlement of the question. There would exist, until 1849, an expectation on the part of one party in the country, that they might alter the law, and an anxiety among the other party to get rid of it altogether. In the year 1842, the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department took another line of argument with regard to the advantages of the Corn Law. He then declared that there was an advantage in the plan of having bonded corn—that it was a most advantageous system for this country to have public granaries in the hands of individuals. There would be no such system under the proposed law; and he was at a loss to know how the right hon. Baronet would attempt to reconcile his argument then with the cause which he now advocated. He knew of no person who had spoken more strongly against the total repeal of the Corn Laws, in the debate of 1842, than the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Smythe), who had, notwithstanding, lately taken office under the right hon. Baronet. The hon. Gentleman, in the year 1842, stated—

"He had no doubt, as was alleged by some, that free trade in corn would benefit both the revenue and consumer. If they put corn on the same footing as tobacco—if they discouraged or prohibited its culture in England, the consumer would benefit greatly, and so would the revenue. But what in that case would become of the agriculturists? Were they prepared to sacrifice one-third of the population—he was taking Mr. Babbage's calculation—to the other two-thirds? Such might be the scheme of a Minister of a party; such ought scheme of a not to be the Minister of a nation; such was not the plan of the right hon. Baronet."

It appeared, however, that three years after that language had been used, the right hon. Baronet did actually propose the very measure which the hon. Gentleman then considered so injurious, and that the

hon. Gentleman, notwithstanding, did not hesitate to take office under him. Several hon. Gentlemen had urged upon the right hon. Gentleman the propriety of having a dissolution of Parliament before the repeal of the Corn Law was proposed—that the present ought not to be the Parliament to judge of the matter. That proposition might be said to involve a constitutional question. They would, it was true, be justified on ordinary occasions in saying when a Parliament was elected for seven years that, therefore, any subject coming before it ought to be considered by the Members of that Parliament on its merits ; but in the present instance, there was, he thought, some distinction to be made from ordinary cases. The present Parliament had been elected under the influence of the agitation of the Corn Law ; and though the question immediately pending was as to the enactment of an 8*s.* duty on corn, still the view taken by the country at the time was, that the real question at issue was one of a Corn Law or no Corn Law. There could be no doubt whatever but that the opinion of the constituencies when taken at the last election was, that there ought to be no alteration of the then existing Corn Law. The electors who sent to Parliament the hon. Members now constituting that House, would be disappointed if their Representatives did not now vote in the same manner as they would have voted immediately after their return. The farmers believed if there were a dissolution of Parliament now, their next Representatives would entertain different opinions on the subject of the Corn Laws, from those now advocated by hon. Gentlemen who supported Her Majesty's Government. He did not know if right hon. Gentlemen opposite recollected the language used in '42 by a right hon. Gentleman who was then Vice-President of the Board of Trade, but who now filled the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies, and who, for some reason not known to the House, did not sit among the Members of Her Majesty's Government in Parliament. That right hon. Gentleman—Mr. Gladstone—stated in 1842, that this Parliament was pledged to protection. He said—

"But he did fervently trust and believe that the House, indicating and adhering to its wise and practical character, would adopt, and by a large majority, the measures which had been recommended by the Government as a great practical improvement, as a change considerable and beneficial to the entire community, while maintaining that great principle which the House was pledged to maintain, a reasonable protection to the agricultural interests of this country, and to that large, he would even say, that decidedly preponderating proportion of the population, which was, directly or indirectly, but essentially, connected with and dependent upon those interests."

The right hon. Gentleman then believed that this Parliament was pledged to maintain protection, and such was still the opinion of agriculturists out of doors. They said to their Representatives, "Because you have altered your opinions you may perhaps persuade yourselves that some of your supporters have done so also ; but we wish you, before you come to any such conclusion, to give us an opportunity of showing whether we have done so or not." He had himself presented some fifty or sixty petitions that day to the effect that the proposed alterations in the Customs' Duties ought not to be made, and also praying that the House would place no confidence in Her Majesty's Ministers. These petitions had been got up, he would beg leave to state, without any effort of his, and he never felt more surprised than when, on reading them over before attaching his signature to them, he found that second prayer set forth, because he recognised among the signatures those of many gentlemen who at the last election had declined to support him because he refused to express any confidence in the right hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel). It was to him extraordinary that the change now proposed by Her Majesty's Government had not been anticipated by some of their supporters. The noble Lord (his noble Friend the Member for the city of London) gave warning to the Members of that House that such a change might be expected. He held in his hand the answer of his noble Friend to an Address that was voted to him at Plymouth, in the year 1841, and in that answer his noble Friend said—

"If the people are united, prohibition, or prohibitory duties, will share the fate of civil disabilities on religious grounds, the slavery of our negro fellow subjects, and other works of darkness. Nor is it necessary for this purpose that the late Ministry should be restored to power—the men who surrendered what they deemed the essential bulwarks of the Church and the Constitution to the menaces of the Roman Catholic Association of Ireland, will be sure to yield the fortresses of commercial restriction when they shall be summoned to do so, by the peaceful but powerful voice of the people of England and Scotland."

His noble Friend gave that warning to hon. Members opposite in 1841 ; but they would not profit by it. On the contrary, they went on supporting Her Majesty's Government under the belief, perhaps, that they

would be able, when the danger approached, of averting it. It appeared, however, that such was not the case, and that they now found out their mistake. He could not suppose that if the case were different, the right hon. Baronet would refuse to listen to the advice of some of his supporters, in taking the sense of the country. His noble Friend the Member for the county of Leitrim (Lord Clements) had stated that in his part of Ireland corn was produced as cheaply as it possibly could, and that the people had the advantage of a good market; and he then asked of what use was protection to the farmers of Ireland? But it struck him that while there was protection, while there existed a duty to prevent the free importation of foreign corn into this country, whenever there was no great need of a supply from abroad, or at all events when the prices here were not extravagantly high, an opportunity was afforded to the Irish producers to send over to this country their surplus corn. Whereas, if no such duty on foreign-grown corn existed, they would clearly be unable to make so much of the produce of their land as they were now enabled to do. His right hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire (Mr. Sidney Herbert) had stated on the preceding night that if the landlords took the view which he (Lord Worsley) supported on this question, they would subject themselves to the charge of doing so for their own gain. He trusted that such was not his motive for opposing this measure; and he did not know that he could give a better proof of the absence of all personal motive in adopting the course which he had taken, than to state that it was his intention to support the right hon. Baronet in his intended alteration of the timber duties. It might be said that these latter duties did not affect the landlords; but he could tell the House that such was not the case—that a reduction of the timber duties would affect the landlords, but would not in the same way affect the tenants. The farmers would not suffer, but, on the contrary, might gain considerable benefit by a reduction in the timber duties, because they would then be able to obtain good timber from abroad at a cheap rate. If he looked to his own individual interest, he should be anxious to keep up the high duty on timber; but he believed a reduction in these duties would be for the benefit of the country generally, and for that reason he was determined that the proposition of the right hon. Baronet should have his warm support. He feared he had wearied the House by reading such lengthened extracts, as they were, no doubt, not very palatable to the House; but he thought he was justified in showing that the right hon. Gentleman opposite did not, a short time ago, consider it necessary to entertain resolutions for a total repeal of the Corn Laws. He had stated elsewhere that he believed it would be for the interest of the country to have the question of the Corn Laws finally settled. There were only two ways of doing so—either by a vote against any alteration whatever in the Corn Laws, or by a measure which would settle them altogether. Settle them they would not by their present plan, because he felt quite satisfied the farmers would still entertain a hope that there might be some means of again getting the protection of the Corn Law; he trusted, therefore, that Her Majesty's Government would seriously consider, though they might now refuse to consent to a dissolution, the consequences likely to result from a want of confidence among the agriculturists in the present Parliament. By persevering with their present measure in this Parliament, Her Majesty's Government would keep themselves in pretty much the same position in which they formerly accused the noble Lord the Member for the city of London of being in when he was sitting on the other side of the House—namely, with being dependent on his opponents for support. He did not know anything more strongly or effectively urged against the Whig Government by means of the constant and persevering cry sent out from the Carlton Club through the country, that Lord Melbourne and his noble Friend the noble Lord the Member for the city of London, were kept in power by the support of the hon. and learned Member then representing the city of Dublin (Mr. O'Connell). They might, perhaps, live to see the day when Her Majesty's present Government would have to thank the same hon. and learned Member, and other Irish Members who usually acted with him, for preventing them from being beaten on their own measure, by their own supporters.

Sir J. Graham: Sir, in rising to address the House, I beg leave to say that I have not forgotten the powerful speech of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, nor the advice which he gave—that Her Majesty's Ministers should not allow this question to degenerate into a mere fiscal question. The hon. Member stated, that when a great party was dissolved, or on

the point of being dissolved, the question on which it broke up, however insignificant in itself, became a great national question. Sir, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I think that no leader of a party, such as that which has for so many years placed confidence in my right hon. Friend at the head of the Government, can be justified for one moment in treating this question except as one of immense national importance, and one which calls for frank explanations. But, Sir, if it is not to be treated as a mere fiscal question, I hope it is not to be treated as a question of mere personality. I cannot blame my noble Friend who has just sat down for the references and quotations which he has made. I say, I do not blame him. I fully admit that past declarations of opinions, made even by Members of the House who have subsequently arrived at power, or who aspire to power, much more the declarations made by the First Minister of the Crown, if at all at variance with the course which he has subsequently pursued, are subjects worthy of reference, and which call for explanation. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire made a direct appeal to the Government, and challenged us if we had changed our opinions, manfully to own it. I answer that challenge. I do frankly avow my change of opinion, and by that avowal I dispose of whole volumes of *Hansard*, and of all the speeches which have been made on the charge of inconsistency. Acting on the advice given by the hon. Member for Northampton, I now make the avowal, and I only ask the House to exercise patience, and extend its indulgence to me, while I point out the reasons of that change of opinion. And before I do so, that I may stand in the position of a man worthy of confidence, I will only glance at a few considerations in defence of my conduct, instead of leaving the matter to rest on the individual honour of the person who makes the avowal. Now what are the tests by which a change of opinion on the part of a particular Member must be tried. The first test which should be applied is this—does the change of opinion promote his personal interest? Perhaps, under the circumstances, I may be allowed to refer to my personal position. All that I possess is as a landlord. I have nothing to hope or to obtain except from the possession of landed property. I have inherited that property, and I may add, that it is a large tract of land of inferior quality; and I congratulate myself that, by my position as a landlord, if the proposed change be dangerous, it exposes me to as great risks as any landed proprietor in the three kingdoms. So much with respect to my personal position. Now, as a Minister of the Crown, allow me to ask you to apply a test equally conclusive. Does a change of opinion on the part of a Minister of the Crown increase his strength, or consolidate his power? Can there be a doubt, after the unhappy scene which we have witnessed during the two last evenings in the conduct of the debate on this side of the House, that my right hon. Friend, before the commencement of this Session, being (as is allowed) a leader of great talent, possessing the confidence of a great party, and immense influence out of the House, has lost that confidence—has, as it is now said, almost dissolved that party, by the conduct which he, from a sense of public duty, has pursued? I will try another test, and it shall be the last. Has the Minister, by a change of opinion, acted unfairly towards his political adversaries, and availed himself of that change of opinion to exclude them from office? I think it is not expedient, at this time, to touch further on the subject I am about to mention; but my right hon. Friend, with my entire concurrence, frankly tendered to Her Majesty the office which he held as the head of the Administration. I concurred in that resignation; and I can truly and sincerely say, it was my earnest desire that this measure should have been brought forward by the noble Lord opposite, in whose hands I think it would have been more properly placed. I state this opinion, unfeignedly and frankly; I thought, after all that has occurred, it would have been better for the public, better for public men, if what has been proposed, as it has become our duty now to propose it, had been brought forward by the noble Lord opposite; and I may say, and I am sure the noble Lord will bear testimony to the truth of what I am saying, that, both in writing and verbally, I assured the noble Lord, that if he, as a Minister, brought forward a measure such as was indicated in his letter to his constituents of London, I, as a private Member of Parliament, would give to that measure my frank and cordial support. Now having disposed of that part of the subject which more personally relates to myself, I may perhaps be permitted to refer to some of the points touched upon by the hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien), and the noble Lord (Lord Worsley),

The noble Lord asks me—is this measure brought forward merely because we think it expedient? He appeared to doubt whether we thought it right. I say that we bring forward this measure, not only because we think it expedient, but because we think it right, and because we think it absolutely necessary. Then the noble Lord proceeded to state, that the time had arrived when this question must be settled. I perfectly agree with him, and I join in the alternative he put; he said it could only be settled in one of two ways: either by peremptorily refusing to go into Committee upon this question, and to entertain any further proposition in relation to agricultural protection; or else that you must proceed as the Government now advises you to proceed, to the total abolition of protection to agriculture. An hon. Member has put the question, as I think, shortly and fairly; he said, the question to be decided is, is the abolition of protective duties adverse to the real interests of the poor? The noble Lord the Member for Stamford (the Marquess of Granby), who addressed the House also with great ability, put it in terms equally distinct; he said, the question is—will this alteration in the Corn Laws, not only give cheap bread, but give a greater quantity of cheap bread, to the working classes? I must say that this is the issue which I think we have to try—this is the great question we have to determine. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire addressed the House with so much ability, that I really was surprised to hear him, even in a passing sentence, speak contemptuously of political economy: he said that the object of political economy, in his opinion, was the accumulation of wealth. I had always understood that the great object of political economy was the distribution of wealth. [Mr. S. O'Brien: I said the distribution of wealth.] Will the hon. Member allow me? In my humble view, the great object of political economy is not the accumulation, but the distribution of wealth, and the application of capital to industry on principles which science and experience shall have proved to be conducive to the happiness and welfare of the greatest number. The question, then, which we have to determine is—is the maintenance of the existing Corn Laws conducive to the interests of the greatest number of the community? Will it insure them an ample supply of food of the cheapest and best kind? The noble Lord who has just sat down, rather apologized for reading extracts from speeches, because he thought they were not very palatable to the House; I must say, that the extracts he read appeared to me by no means distasteful in certain quarters. Will he allow me also, in perfect fairness, to read just two extracts? The noble Lord imputed to my right hon. Friend that not intentionally, but accidentally, what had fallen from him on former occasions, had by no means prepared the House or the public for the course which he now takes; and he referred particularly to a speech made by my right hon. Friend in 1839. Allow me to read a short extract from that very speech. My right hon. Friend, then a leader in Opposition, and a candidate for power, said—

"I consider this statement, that the condition of the labourer has been rendered worse by the operation of the Corn Law, a most important one; and I have no hesitation in saying, that unless the existence of the Corn Law can be shown to be consistent, not only with the prosperity of agriculture and the maintenance of the landlord's interest, but also with the maintenance of the general interests of the country, and especially with the improvement of the condition of the labouring class, the Corn Law is practically at an end."

That was the declaration of my right hon. Friend, as early as the year 1839. It may seem presumptuous in me to refer, in addressing the House, to what has fallen from myself in a former debate; but after what my noble Friend has stated, perhaps in fairness the House will not refuse me permission to do so. On the occasion when the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) moved for going into Committee on the Corn Laws in June last, I said—

"It is decidedly my opinion that the prosperity of agriculture must always depend on the prosperity of the other branches of the native industry of this country, and that the public prosperity is, on the whole, best promoted by giving a fair and uninterrupted current to the natural flow of national industry. I will go further and say, that it is my opinion that, by safe, gradual, and cautious measures, it is expedient to bring our laws, with reference to the trade in corn, into a nearer relation with the sound principles which regulate our commercial policy with respect to every other branch of industry. I will go still further, and say I am not satisfied with the plan, and can be no party to it, of setting up a separate interest for the landlord and the farmer of this country; I believe that their prosperity will, in the main, be found to depend on the wealth, the comfort, and the ease of the great body of the people of this country."

Those were the principles which I avowed upon that occasion. The House, I think, will also remember the memorable Motion of the noble Lord opposite, on the condition of the working classes. I then stated to the House many facts which had come be-

fore me, which were, in my opinion, quite conclusive to prove that the comfort and well-being of the working classes in this country were mainly dependent upon abundance and cheapness, and their misery and distress were mainly occasioned by scarcity and high prices. I frankly avow, that if the course of events had not been interrupted by circumstances which it was impossible to foresee, I should very gladly have adhered to the policy of gradually and progressively diminishing the protection to agriculture, but steadily keeping in view that desirable period when the protection might altogether be removed. But this brings me to the point of the utmost importance in the consideration of this case, namely, the unforeseen circumstances which did occur after the termination of the last Session. First, with respect to the harvest of this country, It was a harvest, as was truly stated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary at War, of a peculiar character. In point of quantity, it was not a deficient harvest; in point of quality, I believe, in the experience of the oldest farmers, there never was so great a variety; and the effect of that has been to point out and to establish the great imperfection of the averages under the existing law. I will not press this further. It was distinctly stated last night, by my right hon. Friend, that in no former year, I believe, has there been such a variety of quality in the corn brought to market, the price varying from 40*s.* for the worst, I believe, up to 70*s.* or 75*s.* for the best. An alteration was made in the law in 1842, in regard to the averages, which had a very decisive effect in one respect: it altogether prevented fraud. By extending the period, and multiplying the towns, in respect to the taking of the averages, fraud was prevented; but as relates to the interest of the consumer, this change had a very adverse effect; for fraud, whenever it had been exercised, was always in favour of the consumer, and for the purpose of opening the ports; and, in my opinion, the general effect of the measure of 1842, though it was not so intended, was, that it rendered protection more stringent, and the law more favourable to the producer, and more adverse to the consumer, than before. This was demonstrated, I must say, by the operation of the scale regulating the duties in the course of last autumn. Prices were rising; the price of the quartern loaf in this metropolis was 9½*d.*, and approaching to the war price. When the quartern loaf had so risen, the duty indicated by the sliding-scale was 14*s.* or 15*s.* per quarter. In point of fact, the sliding-scale would neither slide nor move. And that was its condemnation. I do not wish to go into an historical statement respecting the Corn Laws, or I might mention that from 1773 to 1792 the importation of corn was, in point of fact, free in this country; and it was a remarkable coincidence, which Adam Smith points out when, without marking the cause, he mentions this period as a time when there was a great start in our manufacturing and commercial prosperity—exactly that period, from 1773 to 1792, when the importation of corn was free. I will also observe that a change in our policy with respect to the importation of corn is not a change of any fundamental principle. The Corn Law has been changed and altered five or six times, and yet the avowed object of the framers and founders of the law had never been obtained. I will now return to the point from which I digressed. I was speaking of the imperfect operation of the sliding-scale; and I may add that, together with this deficient harvest, there did arise that which human foresight could not anticipate, the general failure of the potato crop throughout the United Kingdom. This failure was by no means limited to Ireland. The destruction of the potato crop began in the south of England, and I believe that it was more fatal in the southern part of England than in any part of Ireland. In many parts of the southern counties of England the working population, though not altogether subsisting on potatoes, yet are, in a great measure, dependent on that article for their daily food. With respect to Scotland we have the most accurate information; and from the parochial returns we know positively, that in the south of Scotland one-third of the potato crop was destroyed as early as the month of November last. I will not go through all the precise details as to the extent of the failure of the crop in Ireland. Suffice it to say, that, in November, the Government received the Report of Messrs. Lindley and Playfair, by which it appeared that one-half of the whole crop, though not greater than an average, had been destroyed; that one-eighth of that crop must be preserved for seed; and that, consequently, not more than three-eighths of the whole crop remained at that time for the consumption of the year in Ireland. I had been at that time resident in the north of England, and had almost daily communi-

cations in writing, with my right hon. Friend at the head of the Government; and it did appear to me, that this matter of coming scarcity, if not of famine, to be apprehended in Ireland, had an immediate and indissoluble connexion with this question of the Corn Laws; and I stated this opinion very early and decidedly to my right hon. Friend. The noble Lord the Member for Liverpool said, last night, that he could not see that connexion; and the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, following the same track, has also said that he did not see the intimate connexion between the two questions. Will the House, then, allow me to state what was the effect produced upon my mind by this inevitable coming scarcity in Ireland? I foresaw—and I am afraid rightly—that it would be indispensably necessary to give to the suffering community in Ireland aid from the public purse of this country to meet this great calamity. Already some advance of the public money has been asked for; and I am afraid that further advances may still be necessary. Then this great question presents itself—can in fairness any Minister of the Crown propose to the people of Great Britain to take out of the taxes of Great Britain public money to aid in the sustenance of their fellow countrymen in Ireland, while artificially, by laws so designed, the price of the food of the people of Great Britain is enhanced? Other persons may be bold enough to make such a proposition; but I confess that no power on earth could have induced me to be responsible for such advice. I told my right hon. Friend, that if such aid should be necessary, I strongly advised the suspension of the existing Corn Law, and that suspension I find is now generally approved of on this side of the House. The humane, the generous feelings of the landlords of England could not tolerate for a moment that distress, such as that likely to visit Ireland, should not be met by liberal assistance from the public purse. But to give this aid to the Irish people, and at the same time to enhance the price of the food of the great community, who contribute towards the taxes of England, and who by their hard industry are only able to pay those taxes, living themselves in some instances, on potatoes—is a proposition which I never could have maintained as a Minister. But it has been intimated that, under these circumstances, hon. Members generally on this side of the House would have readily assented to the opening of the ports. Then arises the question—if you once suspend the present law, what is the proposition which, at the termination of that suspension, is to be made? I have told you that I am satisfied, that even when scarcity has arisen, when the price of the quartern loaf was high, and when high prices ought to have been counteracted by the self-operation of the scale, that scale does not operate. I have told you that I think the present an unsatisfactory law; and according to my present experience, I could not, after its suspension, have supported its reimposition. I have always stated that my objection to a fixed duty as a permanent fiscal measure is insuperable; because I think that if the duty should be high, it would be impossible, when prices rose, to exact it; and whenever prices fell, if the duty should be low, it would fail for the purposes of protection, and the agricultural interest would then incur all the obloquy of maintaining protection without deriving any advantages from it. We might have proposed some small remnant of the sliding-scale, with a reduction of protection, which it would have been unworthy of the agricultural interest to accept, and still more unworthy of the Government to offer. Under these circumstances, the early abolition of the Corn Laws, as it appeared to me, would be inevitable on its suspension. It was, in my judgment, absolutely necessary to suspend the operation of the law; and I foresaw the necessity, if we suspended the law, of abolishing it; and I again repeat that, in my humble view, our duty was, charged as we were with the responsibility of office, to meet this immediate necessity and to insist on suspension. Nothing could have more gratified me than to see the general arrangements of this question respecting the Corn Law conducted by the noble Lord opposite. The question has been asked, "Have you had any reason since 1842 for changing your opinion?" I say, that since 1842, those who were charged with the administration of affairs, and who watched the various circumstances which have occurred, have had experience, not to be mistaken, leading to conclusive consequences. We had, first of all, the painful and lamentable experience of 1842 itself—a year of the greatest distress, and, now that it is passed, I may say, of the utmost danger. What were the circumstances of 1842? Allow me just to glance at them. We had in this metropolis, at midnight, Chartist meetings assembled in Lincoln's

Inn Fields. Almost for nearly three weeks there were assembled in all the environs of this metropolis, immense masses of people, greatly discontented, and acting in a spirit dangerous to the public peace. What was the condition of Lancashire, the seat of our great staple manufacture, depending for its prosperity on uninterrupted tranquillity and labour? Such was the madness of the people on that occasion, that a great combination existed to stop machinery, and to put an end to the means of employment on which they depended for their daily bread. What was the duty of the Government under these circumstances? It was my painful duty to consult with the Horse Guards almost daily as to the precautions that were necessary for the maintenance of the public peace; a large force of infantry and artillery was despatched to Manchester by railway; and for some time the troops were continually called on, in different parts of the manufacturing districts, to maintain public tranquillity. I can safely say that, for three months, the anxiety which I and my Colleagues experienced with reference to the public peace, was greater than we ever felt before with reference to public affairs. Those were days of high prices and scarcity, of low wages and diminished employment. I am certain, from what I have since observed, that that turbulent disposition, that dangerous disposition, mainly arose from the want of adequate sustenance, in consequence of the high price of food and low wages. What has been my experience for the last two years? I don't take credit to Her Majesty's Government for the altered circumstances. Our measures may, or may not, have conduced to that great end; but, by the bounty of Providence, we have had abundant harvests; with abundant harvests we have had cheapness and full employment; and what has occurred? I can safely say, that for the last twelve months I have not had a single interview with one of the Commissioners of Police with respect to the maintenance of the peace of this metropolis; I do not believe that for the last twelve months I have had one interview with the Horse Guards with respect to the movement of troops in aid of the civil power in any part of the country. Perfect tranquillity and comparative happiness have prevailed, and very different indeed has been the condition of the country from what it was in 1842. Never was the contrast between scarcity with discontent, and plenty with social comfort, more striking than that we have witnessed in these two periods. I will not trouble you with many statistics. The document I am about to read is short, but still, as an analysis with reference to crime, it is pregnant with instruction. I have taken the six counties which may be said to be the seat of our manufacturing industry; I have taken the county of York, the county of Lancaster, the county of Warwick, the county of Gloucester, Cheshire, and Staffordshire, and have compared the commitments for trial in these counties in 1840, 1841, and 1842, when the prices of wheat were 66*s.* 4*d.*, 64*s.* 6*d.*, 57*s.* 3*d.*, with those which took place in 1843, '44, and '45, when the price of wheat was about 50*s.* Now, observe, in Yorkshire the committals were, in 1840, 1,867; 1841, 1895; 1842, 2,598. The scarcity then ceased, abundance with low prices begins; and there was committed for trial in 1843, 2,304; 1844, 1,691; 1845, 1,417; showing a decrease of commitments in the last as compared with the previous period of these years of 14.9 per cent. In Lancashire the commitments in those years were respectively 3,506, 3,987, 4,497, 3,677, 2,893, 2,852, exhibiting a diminution of 21.4 per cent. In Warwickshire the commitments were 1,001, 1,046, 1,003, 1,045, 894, 769, a decrease of 11.2 per cent. In Gloucestershire, including Bristol, the numbers were 1,045, 1,236, 1,252, 1,186, 1,071, 929, showing a decrease of 9.8 per cent. In Cheshire the commitments were 1,042, 943, 1,086, 1,018, 777, 688, a decrease of 19.1 per cent. In Staffordshire the numbers were 923, 1,059, 1,485, 1,175, 885, 717, a decrease of 19.9 per cent.; exhibiting an aggregate decrease of 17 per cent. Upon the whole of these six counties, comparing the years 1842 and 1845, there is a diminution on the aggregate of 18 per cent. I am convinced, with the right hon. Baronet the head of the Government, that it is a fallacy to contend that wages fall with falling prices, and rise with rising prices. It was my noble Friend the Member for Liverpool, I think, who last night contended that it was true in the agricultural districts that wages did rise with rising prices; but he admitted that the proportion was not always equal. Now, I beg you will observe, that to the labouring man the equal proportion between the price of food and the rise of wages is a matter of life and death. But it is also necessary, I must observe, that the proportion should be concurrent as well as equal. If the rise in wages should lag behind the rise of

prices, life itself might be in danger. But I have the experience of Sir John Walsham, who had long the charge of the districts of Norfolk and Suffolk, as Assistant Poor Law Commissioner—who is himself an extensive landed proprietor in the county of Hereford, and who, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, assisted the Poor Law Commission—and he tells me that he has never known wages to have risen beyond from 8*s.* to 10*s.* and 11*s.* in certain counties, and from 9*s.* to 13*s.* in other counties; the utmost rise being 25 per cent.; while he has seen at the same time the price of corn rise from 45*s.* to 90*s.* It is unnecessary to say, in reference to this point, that the rise of wages in those districts is not at all commensurate with the rise in the price of articles of the first necessity. But, as truly stated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary at War, whatever may be the case in the agricultural districts, the converse of the assertion is true with respect to the manufacturing districts. Invariably in the manufacturing districts you will find low prices accompanied by high wages, and high prices by low wages. I mentioned some circumstances which occurred in the month of November last with reference to Ireland; but I have not stated the whole of the case with respect to that time. From a Report which I have received from Mr. Sanders with respect to the West Riding of Yorkshire, I find that at that time there was not merely a rise in prices, but a strong apprehension of still higher prices in several parts of the West Riding, particularly in Bradford, and that several works were put on short time. In several of the cotton districts, also, I had reason to apprehend that the mills were about to be put on short time. When, therefore, we looked to the circumstances of the whole country in the months of November and December, we had no option left, as the general guardians of the condition of the great body of the community, but to adopt the course which we have pursued. We have been told of the danger of being dependent on foreign States for the supply of food; but when we consider that the population of Great Britain in 1815 was 16,000,000, and that at the present moment it is 23,000,000, it seems to me that the time has arrived when it may well become a question, not whether Great Britain can alone supply the amount of food necessary for the population, but whether it will not be difficult at a moderate price to secure food for the whole of that population even with the aid of foreign countries. For myself, I have no apprehension of any great fall of prices from the abolition of the Corn Laws. I think that both the hopes and fears on the subject are greatly exaggerated. I do not believe that the abolition of protection, as matters now stand, will materially lower the price of corn; but I consider that to the great body of consumers it will be a security of inestimable value against the recurrence of high prices. That is my view with regard to supply. With regard to the commercial principle, there can be no doubt whatever. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire described a state of things when there shall be a brisk demand for French paper-hangings, for German hardware, and for Brussels carriages, while workmen are crowding the market with nobody to hire them. How does the hon. Gentleman think that this foreign furniture and those carriages are to be obtained? Whatever may be the form of the transaction by which they are obtained, that transaction of necessity resolves itself into barter. Directly or indirectly there must be an exchange of commodities, and you must in the long run export some of your home productions to pay for what you have got from abroad. I am quite satisfied, if you extend the sphere of your commerce, and import foreign corn into the country steadily and uniformly, not by fits and starts, that you will proportionably extend the amount of your exports and the sphere of your general commerce, promoting the prosperity of all classes. The hon. Member for Northampton (Mr. S. O'Brien) referred to the case of a farmer about to be expelled from the farm his family had cultivated for ages, whose fate he described in the most pathetic terms, for the purpose of illustrating the consequences which the hon. Gentleman presumes will flow from the measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. But another picture was given last night by the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon). The hon. Gentleman represented the farmer as petitioning his landlord in vain for a reduction of rent, when protection shall have been abolished, The noble Lord considered the condition of the farmer as peculiarly helpless and exposed, while protection was still maintained. He said this unhappy man had constantly held out to him the expectation of prices which were never realized—prices which were made the basis of calculation, when he agreed to pay a fixed rent; then he comes to the landlord with "bated breath"

and most humble demeanour, seeking an abatement of rent. The landlord grants somewhat less than the farmer requires; an abatement of 10 per cent. which is found quite inadequate. The following year a further disappointment takes place; and the result, as described most accurately by my noble Friend, is, that under this system of protection and of constant disappointment, over-cropping of the farm takes place; ruin is the consequence; and the rent is not paid; so that protection and fixed rents lead to the most unfavourable results. [*Marks of dissent from the agricultural Members.*] I do not wish to state anything unfairly; but I think that that was the statement made last night by my noble Friend from the spot which the hon. Member for Northamptonshire now occupies. I do not, however, mean to pursue that part of the question further. I am satisfied that it is a fallacy to say that wages follow the prices of corn; and unless they follow the prices of corn, I feel convinced that the great bulk of the community must be deeply injured by this law. Then, again, I say I have no apprehension whatever that the abolition of this law will render this country dangerously dependent on foreigners for its supplies of corn. But I say as a landlord, that I am certain of this —and upon that point I agree with the noble Lord the Member for Lincolnshire (Lord Worsley)—I am certain that a settlement of this question is, with reference to the interests of the landlords, of paramount importance. Well then, how can we have a settlement of the question? With the present feeling of the bulk of the community upon this subject, there is but one settlement possible. Are there no new features observable with reference to this question? I say that there are several. I will not dwell upon the meeting in Wiltshire, which may have been spontaneous, or may have been suggested; but the fact of that meeting having been held is remarkable, and one not to be neglected. But I pass from that, and I challenge any Gentleman from the manufacturing districts to contradict me when I assert that until very lately the opinion of the operatives was, that low prices would infallibly lead to low wages. But I say that they have departed from that belief. I say they have changed their opinions. The experience of the last three years has not been thrown away upon them; and if that be so—if the masters and the men are quite of one mind on this point, they will settle—and I may tell the hon. Member for Knaresborough so—they will easily and amicably settle those questions with respect to the hours of labour which have hitherto divided them. I can very well understand how those working men should overtax their industry, and even call on their wives and daughters to work to excess, that they may obtain subsistence. Necessity might drive them to such resources. But if they can understand that by a change of your law they may be able, without working so long themselves, without requiring their wives or daughters to work as they do now, to live in greater comfort than they have ever known, I have not the smallest doubt that arrangements will be made between masters and men as to the period of labour, and so every ground or pretext for legislative interference on this point will be taken away. It will, I should say, be one of the most happy days that ever dawned in England, when, on account of an alteration in your corn and provision laws rendering a shorter time necessary to procure wages adequate to purchase the comforts of life, the masters and the men shall, without legislative interference, come to an agreement as to the hours of labour. I was rejoiced to learn that the noble Lord the Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire (Lord Morpeth), with whom I have often differed, but whose absence from this House I have never ceased to regret—for it deprived us of one of its brightest ornaments—I was rejoiced to learn that the noble Lord on the hustings of the West Riding, in the presence of the operatives, expressed sentiments similar to those which, in less perfect language, I have endeavoured to convey. I say with reference to the interests of the country gentlemen of England, let us have certainty in regard to the value of our land. You can, however, only obtain that certainty by a change of this law; and that certainty will compensate you for many disadvantages. But in addition to certainty, I say you will have peaceful enjoyment. You will have enjoyment without the jealousy of your poorer neighbours; you will have the inestimable blessing of their good-will without any abatement of their hereditary respect. And, Sir, if I may be allowed to refer to the sentiments of so humble a Member of the landed gentry as I am myself, I must say that I do not think the landlords will have to make any great pecuniary sacrifice; but, entertaining the opinions which I now entertain, founded on my present experi-

ence, I say that if the sacrifice were ten times greater than, I believe, it will be, I, for one, sooner than it should be said of myself, or of any Member of that class to which I belong, that we had wrung from the sufferings of the poor a small increase of rent, or that our present position was inconsistent with the welfare and the happiness of the great body of the community—speaking for myself, I should rather descend to a low estate, and abrogate my inheritance, than submit patiently to such a charge, and be unable to say in my conscience that there was no truth in it. Sir, it has been said that a great party is broken up; it has been said that political ties are severed; it has been said that social relations are disturbed by this proposal; and it has been anticipated, and it is possible, that our Administration will, in consequence, be dissolved. But, Sir, although I should regret the former portion of these consequences, I have the consolation of believing in my conscience that this proposal will rescue a great and powerful nation from anarchy, from misery, and from ruin.

Viscount CLIVE said, that he was of opinion that, whatever might be the abstract merits of the proposition before the House, it was one which ought not to pass without an appeal to the country. When he first entered Parliament, the present Corn Law was in full operation; and though he was returned free and unfettered and unpledged, yet he considered that there was an honourable understanding between him and the constituency with respect to certain measures. There were certain limits and landmarks by which he thought they were to guide their course. He confessed he did not anticipate the change which had taken place in the opinions of Her Majesty's Government. In 1841, the constituencies were the jury who tried the issue which was left to them, and the present Parliament was returned by their verdict, and now they were going to upset their decision without even asking for a new trial. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War stated in his speech, in which he so fully and successfully vindicated the course which he felt it his duty to pursue, his full conviction that if it were shown to the gentry of the agricultural districts in England that by the abolition of the Corn Laws and by surrendering protection, they would administer to the necessities and wants of their fellow countrymen, they would cheerfully and willingly abolish them. That was the very ground on which he stood. If the Government would show them, as they said they could, so galling and so overwhelming a necessity, if they (the Government) had confidence in their own conviction; if they did not think that their new faith was as faithless and as hollow as the old, at least let the Government give them, the agriculturists of England, an opportunity of enjoying, to use the words of the noble Lord the Member for London, the solid satisfaction of believing that they conceded this question to the wants and the necessities of their fellow subjects, and not to what had been forced on them by the dexterity of two discordant Cabinets. The course taken by the Government, he believed, would cause great excitement, great party conflict, and great struggling between parties, if a dissolution were the consequence; but they would be temporary—these evils would pass away; they would be less formidable than the total dislocation of political confidence. Such a course would, in his opinion, be pregnant with evil; and he would therefore give his hearty support to the Amendment of the hon. Member for Bristol. He should, he felt, have at least this satisfaction, that when he should appear before his constituents, they could not upbraid him with those words which the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, in the year 1840, used to the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Edinburgh, namely, "that he deserved that his classical constituents should say to him—

'Nusquam tuta fides.'"

Debate adjourned to Thursday.

THE DRAINAGE (IRELAND) BILL.

The House then went into Committee on the Drainage (Ireland) Bill.

On Clause 11 being proposed,

Sir W. SOMERVILLE objected to the power now possessed by a single proprietor possessing half the land of the district to be drained, who, if he chose to hold out against the rest of the proprietors, might prevent the Act from coming into operation. Supposing there was a tract of land of 2,000 acres in extent to be drained, and one individual landowner possessed 1,000 acres; there might be ten individuals, owning 100 acres each, who were unanimous in wishing the work to be done, but this single proprietor had the power of preventing the drainage of an entire dis-

trict. The hon. Baronet moved an Amendment to the effect that—

"In cases where there was but a single dissentient, and the rest of the landowners were unanimous, the Bill should nevertheless take effect."

A short discussion ensued, and the Amendment was withdrawn.

House resumed. Bill to be reported.

House adjourned at one o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Wednesday, February 11, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW WRITS.—For Mayo, *v.* Mark Blake, Esq., Chiltern Hundreds.

PUBLIC BILLS. 2° County Works Presentments (Ireland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED. By Mr. Stafford O'Brien, from Northampton, against Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Mr. Dickinson and Sir Thomas Wilde, from Somerset, Worcester, and Stafford, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Lord Hotham, and Mr. Knight, from Holderness and Redmarley D'Abitot, against the Government Measure respecting Customs and Corn Importation.—By Mr. Sharman Crawford, from Cadogan Williams, for establishing Agricultural Schools (Ireland).—By Mr. Bright, from Kilfiera and Killard, for Relieving Distress (Ireland).—By several hon. Members, from a number of places, for the Ten Hours' (Factories) Bill.—By Mr. Hindley, and Sir Charles Lemon, from New Lanark, Totness, and Perran Wharf, against Enrolment of Militia.

The House met at 12 o'clock.

THE POOR LAW (IRELAND).

MR. SHARMAN CRAWFORD, in pursuance of notice, called the attention of the Members of the Government to the necessity of "immediately extending the powers of the Irish Poor Law Act, so as to enable the boards of guardians to dispense outdoor relief to persons in destitution, in the event of the poor-houses being filled." He was anxious to bring this matter under the serious and immediate consideration of the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department; for in his (Mr. Crawford's) opinion no subject of more vital importance could possibly engage the attention of Her Majesty's Cabinet. The Irish Poor Law differed from the English and Scotch in this respect, that under no circumstances whatever, let the emergency be ever so pressing, could outdoor relief be administered to the destitute. The English Poor Law Act invested the Commissioners with authority to accord outdoor relief under circumstances of peculiar and urgent emergency; and the Commissioners in their general orders had made special provision for the administration of assistance to the poor. For instance, it was specially provided that outdoor relief should be given in cases of sudden and serious necessity, and particularly in the event of the applicants being distressed widows; but it was greatly to be deplored that no such proceeding was warranted by the Irish Act. According to the provisions of that Act, it was not competent either for the Commissioners or the guardians, under any circumstances whatsoever, to administer relief outside the walls of the poor-house. This he considered a lamentable state of things, especially so in the present unhappy condition of Ireland. He now called the attention of Her Majesty's Ministers to this subject, and he was especially prompted to do so in consequence of having perused a Report which had recently emanated from the Inspector of Workhouses in Kells, from which it appeared that from 150 to 200 persons had recently made application for relief to the guardians of the Kells Union. They represented that they were in the deepest distress, and yet, so were the guardians hampered, that, no matter how urgent might be the destitution of the applicants, they (the guardians) had no power to administer relief to them, otherwise than by admitting them into the poor-house. Now, taking it for granted that each of those applicants had five in family (and the average was not an unfair one in Ireland), no less than 1,000 persons would have to be admitted into the house; but it was more than probable that the house could not afford accommodation for so many. It should be borne in mind, that under the Irish Poor Law Act, no applicant having a family could be admitted into the poor-house unless his family were admitted with him. This was an indispensable condition; and if some change in the law in this respect were not to be introduced, he was at a loss to think how or where sufficient indoor accommodation could be found for all the applicants who were likely to seek relief in the event of the apprehended scarcity occurring. He wished to call the attention of the House to the melancholy situation in which boards of guardians would be placed if they had multitudes of starving families crowding to their doors, and possessed no power of giving them relief. The Poor Law was notoriously unpopular in Ireland; but it would assuredly become still more so if, in the event of scarcity occurring, its provisions were not relaxed in some manner that would permit the administration of outdoor relief. He submitted it to the consideration of the right honourable Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, whether it was not highly desirable that, under the present peculiar circumstances

of Ireland, the Poor Law Act should not be amended in this respect.

Sir J. GRAHAM: The subject which has been introduced to the notice of the House by the hon. Gentleman is a matter of far too great importance for incidental discussion. I can assure him the condition of Ireland has for months engaged the most anxious consideration of Her Majesty's Government. I am not one of those who underrate the difficulties that now exist in that country; on the contrary, I do regard the condition of a large portion of the Irish population for the next four or five months, until the new crop of potatoes comes into use, with much anxiety. The difficulty is, I hope, but temporary; and, if the increase of next year be blessed by Providence, I hope the evil, such as it is, may be of a passing nature. I do, however, admit that for the next five months the difficulty will be great, and must be met by provident arrangements. With this view the Government has introduced various measures, all tending to increase the means of employment in Ireland. We have brought forward a Public Works Bill, advancing 50,000*l.*, and placing that sum in the hands of Commissioners to be laid out in public works immediately as the demand arises. We have also introduced a Bill, which stands now as an order of the day, to permit the grand juries of Ireland immediately to distribute, under contract, 130,000*l.*, anticipating in spring the presentments of the summer assizes; and to contract for other works, immediately to be proceeded with, to the extent of 100,000*l.* There is another Bill, which stands for a second reading to-day, in which we propose, not by loan, but by grant from the public purse, to contribute a considerable sum for making piers and harbours; and there is also proceeding through this House a Bill giving additional temporary facilities with a view to more general employment under the Drainage Act which passed last year. On that Bill we propose to engraft certain clauses for encouraging navigation in Ireland; and it is possible that in Committee of Supply we should feel it to be our duty, under the particular circumstances of Ireland, to ask a grant in aid of that object. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, with respect to the danger of approaching fever, which, unhappily, generally follows a period of scarcity in Ireland, the Poor Law Commissioners have made the most ample arrangements. The attention of Her Majesty's Government has been particularly directed to this point; and if that calamity should unhappily arise, we shall not be taken by surprise. I do not think I need at present go further; but if the necessity of Ireland should require it, the Government will be prepared to meet that necessity by a special measure suited to the particular occasion. What does the hon. Member now ask? He seeks to meet what I hope is but a temporary evil, by introducing in the law regulating relief in Ireland, which, after a full discussion, was deliberately adopted by the Legislature, a great change; and I am sure I do not misrepresent the fact when I state my firm belief that, had such a proposition rendering outdoor relief compulsory in Ireland, and extending it only to the aged and infirm, formed part of the Bill as originally introduced, the measure would not have received the sanction of the Legislature. This, I say, even if the proposition had referred only to the aged and infirm; but the hon. Gentleman now goes further, and asks, under the pressure of temporary circumstances, to extend outdoor relief to the able-bodied by means of a compulsory rate. We have had experience in this country of the danger, even under temporary pressure, of giving outdoor relief to the able-bodied. It constituted, in fact, a payment out of the rate in aid of wages, and led to a system of relief now called in England the labour rate, which of all the noxious offshoots of the Poor Law in this country, proved to be the most dangerous and the most injurious. We have had experience in this matter in England; and having that experience, I, for one, could not for one moment entertain a proposition which, even upon a general view of policy in reference to Ireland, I seriously and deliberately believe would introduce a most perilous and noxious system. If I could not on general principles consent to the adoption of such a course, much less could I be induced for a temporary object, and to meet what I hope is but a temporary emergency, consent to so great a change in the law. On the one hand I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we are not unprepared to meet the difficulties of this Irish scarcity, which I trust will be of short duration; but on the other we feel we should greatly betray our duty, if, under the existing pressure, we consented to favour a system of relief in Ireland which we believe dangerous in principle, and which our experience in England has shown to be surrounded with great difficulty, and pregnant with much mischief.

Mr. SHAW urged upon the Government the great importance of resisting, from the first, every attempt to introduce outdoor relief, or anything in the nature of a labour rate, in connexion with the Poor Law in Ireland. The law itself, after having encountered great difficulty and opposition, was only beginning fairly to operate in that country. The workhouses were not yet nearly full, notwithstanding the emergency to which the right hon. Baronet (Sir James Graham) had alluded; but should they become full, and even as the case stood at present, the burden of the poor rate was as heavy as those subjected to it could well bear. As the emergency of the potato failure in Ireland had been referred to, he would no further go into the question at present than to say that, while he deplored the occurrence of any failure, and desired every means to be taken to alleviate such distress as it might occasion, still he was bound to say, that he considered the extent of the failure had been greatly exaggerated. He found fault with the Government for having so long left Ireland without a resident Poor Law Commissioner, although there had been an understanding to that effect at the time of the passing of the Act.

Sir JAMES GRAHAM observed that the wishes of the right hon. and learned Gentleman had been already anticipated by Government, for a resident Commissioner had just been appointed for Ireland.

Mr. FITZSTEPHEN FRENCH believed that the new Commissioner alluded to by the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department was a very able gentleman, and one of high respectability; but he objected to the appointment because it was another illustration of a system which had been too long practised in Ireland—the system of giving to Englishmen and Scotchmen the offices which ought to be held by Irishmen. The hon. Gentleman who had preceded him had said that the law was a most unpopular one; and he (Mr. French) believed that it would be impossible to get one more so, for it would not have the effect of relieving any destitution in Ireland, and it was perfectly useless to meet any sudden emergency. The Government had admitted that nearly four millions of the people of Ireland were accustomed to depend upon the potato crop for sustenance. If that crop failed, where were those four millions to obtain relief? Surely not in the workhouses, which could not accommodate more than one hundred thousand. No doubt the proposition of the hon. Member for Rochdale for outdoor relief would entail vast expense on the country; but when the lives of four millions of human beings were at stake, surely no considerations of expense should deter the Government from discharging their duty towards the people. The right hon. Baronet had given himself and his Colleagues great credit for the measures they proposed taking, with a view to meet the approaching crisis. He felt himself bound to give them credit for the best possible intentions; but, after some inquiry, he was inclined to think that the result of the measures they proposed would scarcely be so beneficial as they anticipated. He gave the Government great credit for their anxiety to afford the people of Ireland employment at the earliest possible moment, by giving precedence to Irish Railway Bills; but even though they were passed with as little delay as possible, they would not confer the benefit they were intended to bestow, as nearly six months must expire after their passing before the necessary plans and sections could be got ready for the commencement of the works; in fact, nearly nine months must expire before the people of Ireland could obtain employment in these great national works. Then there were several clauses in the Public Works Bill to which he objected. He agreed with Lord Roden that that Bill would not be so beneficial as Her Majesty's Government seemed to anticipate. The labour of carrying out the provisions of the Bill was to be imposed on the Board of Works in Ireland, who had already more labour imposed on them than they could adequately perform, as the improvement of the harbours, parks, bridges, and lunatic asylums. They were the Commissioners of Kingstown harbour, Howth harbour, Donaghadee harbour, Ardglass harbour, besides which they had Portumna bridge under their superintendence, and were supervisors of lunatic asylums and the fisheries. In fact, they had already much more on their hands than any board that was ever created could perform with credit to themselves or satisfaction to the country. Why, then, throw more work upon them, or entrust them with more power? Besides, he could not understand the necessity of making these gentlemen into an operative body, and entrusting them with the execution of all the works connected in any way with the drainage of the country. There were several clauses in that Bill to which he should feel it his duty

to move amendments, in order that it might have the effect intended. The original powers which were intended to be entrusted to the Drainage Commissioners should be given to that portion of the community whose interests were bound up with the soil they possessed. The Commissioners stated that they would give higher wages to those whom they employed than the generality of landowners; but he denied that this was so. And even if they did give a larger amount of wages, it was in the exercise of a most irresponsible power —that of laying out any sums of money which they might think fit. The hon. and learned Gentleman concluded by giving notice that upon the bringing up of the Report of the Committee on Drainage (Ireland) Bill, he would be prepared with a number of clauses which he considered would have a tendency to remove the objectionable portions of the measure.

Colonel CONOLLY differed from the hon. Member opposite with reference to the working of the Poor Law (Ireland) Bill. He believed that the Poor Law was at present working well in Ireland; and he felt bound to state that the prejudices which existed against the measure in that country had been greatly fomented in certain quarters. He believed that, notwithstanding all this agitation upon the subject, the prejudices were fast disappearing. He felt convinced that they did not exist on the part of those for whom the relief was intended. He was himself connected with four boards of guardians, and was enabled, therefore, to form an opinion upon the subject; and his opinion was, that this measure was rapidly approaching that state of perfection which it was intended by the Government it should reach. The matter was now before the other House, and he hoped it would receive their Lordships' best consideration, and that such measures as they considered expedient to adopt would be speedily sent down to this House, and meet with the approbation and support of hon. Members. He was astonished at the facility with which the rates had been collected for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of the Act. He never knew a period when it was so easy to collect the poor rate in Ireland as at present. There was nothing, he conceived, to justify them to calling upon Parliament for an alteration in the law, though there were some points that might be brought before the Committee of the House of Lords; but they were very trifling indeed. He thought that the jealousy entertained of the Commissioners rather tended to impede the working of the law; and one of the most prominent points of complaint made against them had reference to the manner in which they interfered with the different boards of guardians. He admitted that the Commissioners did interfere, and that with very little deference to the opinions of the boards of guardians; and he thought that was more to be imputed to their *modus operandi* than to the effect of the law itself. He felt authorized to say, that it was more to the mode of proceeding adopted by the Commissioners — which, certainly, he admitted to be offensive, and calculated to excite and generate misunderstanding which would not otherwise have existed—that objection was made, than to any effect resulting from the operation of the law. He agreed with the hon. Member for Roscommon, that the dominant disposition evinced by the Commissioners was extremely offensive, and he could not understand why they should thus quarrel with persons whom they ought to conciliate. He was sincerely disposed to carry out the law in every way; but he felt that every man was called upon to point out the discrepancies—and that was all they could be called—to which he alluded; and in referring to them, he addressed himself more to the Commissioners than to the House. The hon. Gentleman, when bringing forward his Motion, had overlooked one fact. It was plain if an increased levy was to be made, that it would be calculated to cause a great aggravation of the present suffering of the people; and he had no hesitation in saying, that it might tend to destroy a system which, day by day, was acquiring more of the confidence of the country. He attributed that increased confidence and respect in a great degree to the effect of Lord Eliot's Act, by which he thought a just line was drawn between the parties who were able, and those who were not able, to pay the cess. He thought that ought to have been done in the first instance; but the defect had been judiciously repaired, and that, he might say, served to overcome the main difficulty that had existed with respect to the raising of the rates.

Mr. MOORE O'FERRALL could not, from what he understood of the Motion of the hon. Member (Mr. S. Crawford), go to the same length as the hon. Member. He believed that if, under the present circumstances, they were to give outdoor relief,

it would not only be fatal to the existence of all the property of the country, but ultimately fatal to the poor themselves. He thought the course adopted by Her Majesty's Government, in the present state of affairs, was preferable to that proposed by the hon. Member. They had introduced an Act to which another hon. Friend of his (Mr. French) had objected, but in that objection he (Mr. O'Ferrall) could not concur. There was no doubt that the powers conferred by that Act were very great; but it was to be recollected that the landlords of Ireland had a sufficient period allowed to them to carry out those useful works themselves. They had sufficient time to apply the Act of Parliament, as had already been done in England, and to carry out those works in Ireland as had been done in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, and other parts of England. The Act gave power to reclaim unreclaimed land, and then to sell so much of the improved land as would be sufficient to pay for the expenses of working such improvements. That was a law that was in existence in England for 300 years. The corporation of London had exercised that power; they took up large tracts of land, drained them, reclaimed them, and sold them. What was much better, with respect to Ireland, it was proposed to take a man's unreclaimed land, to improve it, sell part of it to pay the expense incurred, and give him back the remainder of the estate reclaimed. He was of opinion, that when the Government generously came forward to give the machinery that a public board afforded to drain and improve estates, their proposition ought not to meet such opposition; and he was sure his hon. Friend, when he took into consideration the advantage that was likely to be conferred on Ireland by such a measure, would be the last person in the House to object to it. With regard to the working of the Poor Law in Ireland, he must concur in a great deal that fell from the hon. Member for Donegal (Colonel Conolly). He approved of the manner in which the law was carried out in the county with which he (Mr. O'Ferrall) was connected, and the boards of guardians in that county discharged their duties efficiently. There certainly had been differences in some districts, but the difficulty had arisen from the conduct of the Commissioners. They appeared to have set out with an impression on their minds, which was much too common in the minds of the legislators and governors of this country generally, that every man in Ireland must be a distressed man. They set out with the view that every board of guardians was composed of jobbers, and that no man amongst them was to be believed. Thus it occurred that the difficulties experienced in the carrying out of the measures, were difficulties of their own making. He wished that the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department would use that power which the law vested in him, by exercising control over the Commissioners; and he (Mr. O'Ferrall) could assure that right hon. Gentleman that many cases might be made out which properly called for his interference. Now, there was an opportunity in the House of Lords for making out that case; and he hoped, when it was made out, the Government would be prepared to deal with it.

Mr. SHARMAN CRAWFORD, in explanation, was understood to say that the assessment would not fall on the small holders, but on the large farmers and on the landlords. He also observed that he did not propose that the right should be given to the poor to seek outdoor relief, but simply that, when it was necessary, such relief might be given under the orders of the Commissioners.

Subject at an end.

FOREIGN GRAIN IN BOND.

Lord GEORGE BENTINCK rose to move for a Return giving the numbers and names of the holders of Foreign Grain now in bond in the Queen's Warehouses in Great Britain and Ireland. He understood there was some technical difficulty about giving the names of the holders; that, in fact, it was not easy to tell who the holders were; and therefore, he had agreed with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to change the name 'holders' to 'importers,' and there would be no difficulty, he believed, in giving the names of the importers. It would be thus shown that it was a very limited number of persons to whom a boon would be given to the amount of something like half a million sterling by the measure before Parliament for the immediate reduction of the duty on foreign corn, and on wheat especially, to 4*s.* a quarter when it was at a certain price. It appeared that there was in bond 944,548 quarters of wheat, and 451,464 cwt. of flour. It appeared, also, that in the course of the month of December last there was no less a quantity than 8,097 quarters of wheat and 2,177 cwt. of flour paid duty at about the rate of

14*s.* per quarter. The operation of the present measure would be to reduce the duty immediately from 16*s.*, at which it now stood, to 4*s.* per quarter, and the whole of this wheat would consequently be entered for home consumption at a duty, not of 16*s.*, but at a duty of 4*s.* As soon as the measure passed, the whole of this quantity of wheat, exceeding one million of quarters, would come into consumption at a duty of 4*s.*, and the difference would not be gained by the consumers, but by the corn dealers; and the practical result of the measure of the Government clearly would be to make a present to some two hundred, three hundred, or it might be four hundred individuals of upwards of half a million sterling. It was, therefore, most desirable the country should know what would be the effect of this measure, and who the persons would be to profit by its operation. He would have liked, he confessed, to know the names of the persons who were thus holders of grain; but he understood there was an objection to disclose the names of such persons, on the principle that such a proceeding might interfere with private trade and speculation. It might be thought that because he had brought forward this Motion he suspected Her Majesty's Government of some sort of jobbing; but he could assure his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he could not for a moment entertain the slightest opinion of that kind of him; and he believed, if the truth were known, his right hon. Friend as cordially disapproved of the measure as he (Lord George Bentinck) did. It was well, however, the public should know that the Exchequer was to be robbed of half a million sterling to be put into the pockets of some 200 or 300 corn merchants. This was most objectionable, and it was particularly so when they recollected the amount of relief which the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department said they were about to offer to Ireland in the way of advancing loans. They proposed to give 50,000*l.* in one way, and 30,000*l.* in another way, and 80,000*l.* in another way. The whole amount of relief was only 260,000*l.*; and surely they should pause before they made a present of half a million sterling to 200 or 300 corn merchants, which might be better disposed of in affording relief to the distressed people of Ireland. He (Lord George Bentinck) would alter his Motion to suit the views of his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and move for a Return, giving the number of the Importers of Foreign Corn now in bond in the Queen's Warehouses in Great Britain and Ireland.

Mr. ESCOTT would suggest to the noble Lord that he might make an addition to his Motion, which he thought would help to effect the object he had in view. He said his object was to ascertain what individuals would profit by this measure, and therefore he suggested to the noble Lord to include in the return the number of individuals who were to eat the bread made out of this corn.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER said, that so far from wishing to withhold any information upon this important subject, he readily acquiesced in the Motion made for the presentation of those returns. He should have contented himself with merely notifying his assent to the Motion, were it not for some observations which fell from the noble Lord, and with reference to which he thought it necessary to give some explanation. The noble Lord appeared to be greatly alarmed at the immense benefit which individuals who were the holders of bonded corn would receive by the alteration of the law; but his hon. Friend (Mr. S. O'Brien), near the noble Lord, who spoke from the same side of the House on the preceding night, had said that to the opening of the ports, for the admission of corn, he had no objection. Now, if they adopted the suggestion of his hon. Friend, by opening the ports, they would have given to the holders of foreign corn not the difference between 14*s.* and 4*s.*, but the difference between 14*s.* and nothing, so that in that case the loss of the revenue would be greater. But he could not admit his noble Friend's argument, that because the duty on foreign corn was 14*s.*, the corn now in bond would be brought into market at that duty. If his noble Friend would look to the returns on the Table of the House, and would look to the periods at which corn was imported, and the periods at which it came into the market, he would find there was a great deal of importation under the sliding-scale, not for the purpose of bringing in the corn at the high duty which existed when it was imported, but for the purpose of bringing it in at a shilling duty when the prices would admit of the importation of corn at that duty. That was the complaint made of the operation of the law by hon. Gentlemen interested in agriculture. It was one of the complaints to which the law was liable; and he had no reason to suppose—unless they believed

that those individuals were not capable of taking advantage of the fall in the duty—that because they imported corn when the duty was 18*s.* or 19*s.*, they did not mean to bring it in on terms more favourable to themselves. He (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) did not rise for the purpose of entering at length into the question; but he wished to state that when his noble Friend said that he was supporting a measure of which he did not approve, his noble Friend made a statement which had no foundation in fact. If he gave his support to a measure of which he did not approve, it would be unworthy of him as a Gentleman, and discreditable to him as a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. NEWDEGATE believed that the object of Government, as it was the object of all, was to relieve the particular distress in one portion of Her Majesty's dominions, Ireland—a distress which all equally deplored; for he could answer for the agricultural Members that they were ready to meet that distress by greater sacrifices than had been yet proposed, if it were necessary. But they held that the revenue would be better expended in meeting the particular evils which pressed on one portion of Her Majesty's dominions, than sacrificing it in such a way as to let it go into the general consumption, where it would produce no relative depreciation in the price of grain. They maintained that relief was not needed by the whole community, but that it was required in Ireland, and they would rather see the revenue given to the people than thus sacrificed in the way pointed out by the noble Lord. No one prized more than he did the whole system of bonding corn, but with free trade he should like to know how the bonding system could be carried out. When he heard such an answer as that given by the hon. Member (Mr. Escott), that his noble Friend should ask for a return of the persons who would eat the corn now in bond, he would recommend the hon. Member to undertake so vain a task himself.

Mr. WODEHOUSE begged to confirm what had fallen from the hon. Member for Warwickshire. He assured the House, that there was no measure either in the way of precaution or relief of any sort or kind with respect to Ireland which they (the protectionists) were not ready to give their assent to. He had expressed this opinion before Parliament met, and he repeated it now; and he therefore thought his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose integrity no man had ever doubted yet, ought to have been a little more sensible of the views by which they had been guided, both with respect to the Government of which he was a Member, and to the general interests of the country.

Mr. S. O'BRIEN said, that as he was the individual to whom the Chancellor of the Exchequer had referred, he begged to say that his remarks last night related entirely to Ireland, and if he had extended them to England he should have been conceding what he deemed an important part of his argument. He begged to add, that it was to the protective system that they owed the fact that they had hitherto been independent of the supplies from foreign countries. He believed that this was the kingdom in Europe best protected against the horrors of famine. The right hon. Gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had referred to the fact of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn sitting next him, as if that were any reason for his agreeing with him. He certainly did agree with him; but the right hon. Gentleman's experience during the last few days might have shown him that it was quite possible for Gentlemen to sit next to each other, and yet to totally disagree in reference to commercial policy.

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER: I understood my hon. Friend (Mr. S. O'Brien) to say distinctly that if we had thrown open the ports the measure should have had his approbation.

Lord GEORGE BENTINCK explained, that his argument was that the price of wheat had arrived at that point when it was perfectly compatible with the profits of trade to pay a duty of 14*s.* on wheat, inasmuch as in the course of December the duty had fallen to such a point as that nearly 9,000 quarters of wheat had been released from bond at a 14*s.* duty, and therefore, as his right hon. Friend (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) was going immediately to reduce the duty to 4*s.*, he thought he had a right to assume that at least 10*s.* of the duty remitted would go, not to the advantage of the consumer, but to the advantage of the corn merchant. That was the argument he had used. His right hon. Friend had repudiated the allegation he had made, that so far from approving of the measures lately propounded by the head of Her Majesty's Government, his right hon. Friend as cordially disapproved of them as he did. He certainly understood the First Minister of the Crown

to say that there were only three Cabinet Ministers who agreed in oinpion with him. He begged to ask his right hon. Friend whether he was one of the three who agreed with the First Minister of the Crown? Public rumour had stated that the three were the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department (Sir James Graham), Lord Aberdeen, and the right hon. the Secretary at War (Mr. Herbert). He had, therefore, assumed that his right hon. Friend did not concur with the principle of the measure now before the country. With regard to the observations which had been made by his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Escott), really they appeared to him quite as incomprehensible as the conduct of the hon. and learned Gentleman in sitting there and supporting the measure for the abolition of the Corn Laws, seeing that the hon. and learned Gentleman was returned for the city of Winchester in opposition to two opponents who were the conscientious and honest supporters of a repeal of the Corn Laws. He thought that the hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion that he (Lord G. Bentinck) should move an Amendment on his own Motion, and have a return of the consumers of wheaten bread, or of those who might be consumers of wheaten bread not yet out of bond—he thought that suggestion as incomprehensible as the conduct of the hon. and learned Gentleman, who thought it consistent with his public duty and with his personal honour to have stood for the city of Winchester, when the price of wheat was somewhere about 62*s.* the quarter, and when the price of the four-pound loaf was 10*d.*, in opposition to two gentlemen whose banner was a large loaf and cheap bread; for the hon. and learned Gentleman was proposed for the city of Winchester by gentlemen who, in their speeches, as mover and seconder, told the electors that the question for them to decide was whether or not they would elect two gentlemen who were determined to maintain the then existing system of the Corn Laws, and to protect the agricultural interests of the country, or those who advocated an entire repeal of those laws. He repeated that when the public conduct of the hon. Gentleman was as incomprehensible as he had described it, he (Lord G. Bentinck) would be mad to follow such a leader, or allow himself to be guided in anything by the example or advice of the hon. Gentleman.

MR. ESCOTT hoped the noble Lord was more comfortable after that explanation. He (Mr. Escott) did not presume to dictate to the noble Lord what course he should pursue; but he had thought it not unparliamentary to suggest an alteration in his Motion. The noble Lord had stated that his object was to ascertain who were the individuals who would profit by the measure; and, as he (Mr. Escott) thought that the public would reap the profit, he had thought it a not unimportant addition to the Motion of the noble Lord to have the names of the consumers. With respect to what the noble Lord had said about him and his constituents, he had no objection, if the noble Lord thought it worth while, to discuss that question with him, either there or elsewhere; but, from the specimen which the noble Lord had just given of his information, he must say, that the noble Lord was totally ignorant of the facts of the case.

House adjourned at a quarter to two o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, February 12, 1846.

MINUTES.] *Sat first.* Lord Loftus, after the Death of his Father.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. By the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Beaumont, from Landowners, and others of Padbury, and several other places, against the principles of Free Trade, and praying for Protection to Native Industry.—By the Earl of Charleville, from Chairman and Board of Guardians of the Nenagh Union, for the Adoption of Measures for the Employment of the Poor of Ireland.—By Lord Hatherton and Earl Grey, from Inhabitants of Maybole, and several other places, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.

RAILROADS — REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE.

The EARL of DALHOUSIE laid on the Table a Report from the Select Committee on Railroads. In doing so, he took the opportunity of recalling to their Lordships' recollection, that on a former occasion it was stated that arrangements had been made by which Irish Railway Bills would commence immediately in that House; and it was in order to prevent certain discrepancies which would otherwise occur that he recommended the adoption by their Lordships of certain regulations in the Report, which would assimilate the practice of the House of Lords for the present Session to that of the other House. Upon one point the Committee could not, by the forms of the House, make a formal report; but he had been authorized to state that they had taken into their consideration the expe-

diency of making some such arrangements respecting Bills commencing in that House as those which had been carried into effect last Session—viz., that the Bills should be grouped, and that all lines relating to the same district, or having some definite or connecting link, should be referred to one group. The Committee had proceeded to arrange the Bills into groups, but they could not carry out the arrangement until the Bills came before them. It was important it should be known, that no Bill of a particular group would be considered without reference to others of the same group, and that when the whole were before the Committee, they would report to the House.

CRIME IN IRELAND.

The MARQUESS of CLANRICARDE then rose to move for—

"A Return of all Murders or Attempts to murder, committed in Ireland since the 1st of January, 1842, specifying the County and Barony of the County where such murder, or Attempt to murder, was committed, and the Name and Condition of the Person murdered, or assaulted as aforesaid; and also a Return of all Rewards offered, since the 1st of January, 1842, for the Discovery of Offenders who have committed Outrages against the Person or against Property, specifying the Date and Place of each Offence, the Nature thereof, and whether or not such Reward was claimed, and the Instances in which a Conviction has followed."

His Notice did not refer to the general state of Ireland, and he should confine himself to the topic in hand; for he had observed great mischief to Ireland and to Parliament to arise from mixing and confusing together matters relating to the physical, social, and political evils of that country. The present subject referred to the administration of the criminal law, in respect of which the Executive Government was much to blame. Crime had prevailed to a degree almost, if not quite, unprecedented: this return might not show so great a number of crimes of late as in some former years; but it would show this, that a spirit of combined outrage had now spread over a greater part of Ireland than ever within his memory, or that of many much older than himself, in the centre of Ireland, in some parts even of the north, and in the west and south. This increase had been gradual, and he had to accuse the Government of great neglect in respect to them. It was impossible, with their means of intelligence, so much better than those of the public, that they should not have been aware of what was going on in Ireland; indeed he knew that communications had been made to the Government upon this very subject; and last Session he had the honour of presenting petitions to their Lordships, setting forth the state of the country, and praying for their interference. It was the duty of Government to have taken some steps to prevent such an increase of crime. The failure of checking it must be either in the law, or in the mode of administering it. If the law was sufficient to put down crime and to afford protection to honest men in their honest callings, the law ought to have been put into operation. But if it was not, then the Government were bound to come to Parliament, and either propose some permanent alteration of the criminal law, so as to provide for the security of life and property; or, if necessary, to propose some of those temporary acts which had at different times been resorted to. But no such thing had been done by Government. Instead of encouraging the good and repressing the bad, their whole line of conduct had been such as to give encouragement to evil-doers, and to discourage, or at least to hold out no encouragement to those very few individuals who had had the manliness and loyalty to stand up against those outrages. Last year he presented a petition on the subject, in which a permanent improvement was suggested—namely, that wherever gross outrage had been committed, a fine should be imposed on the inhabitants of the locality, and that the county should be bound to make provision for the surviving relatives in cases of murder. No objection was offered to that suggestion; but matters were allowed to go on just as they were. In Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne, Her Majesty is made to use a phrase which intimated that some attention would be paid to the subject, but not in such terms as to reassure honest men. Her Majesty says—

"I have observed, with deep regret, the very frequent instances in which the crime of deliberate assassination has been of late committed in Ireland."

Was there any person who did not view it with regret, and was the language used from the Throne sufficient to reassure persons that the law would be put in force? It was impossible to have used milder terms. The next paragraph stated—

"It will be your duty to consider whether any measures can be devised, calculated to give increased protection to life, and to bring to justice the perpetrators of so dreadful a crime."

What was that but actually implying a doubt whether the law of the land

could be framed in a manner to protect life? But life was not the only thing to be considered: there were outrages on property, and to assassination was to be added a criminal combination, which he believed had never been exceeded. Three weeks had elapsed since Parliament met—assassination was still going on—and yet no notice had been given by Government on the subject. After the communication which had been addressed to them, it was the duty of the advisers of the Crown to be prepared at the earliest moment to take energetic steps to restore tranquillity. He had no wish to go into details. It could not be denied that not only assassination, but combinations and secret societies prevailed among the people, and to such an extent as to attract the notice, not only of the Government, but of the Repeal Association. In fact, a great part of Ireland was in a state of insurrection: it was notorious that about 2,000 persons had encamped before the town of Limerick; and in other parts of the country large assemblies took place at mid-day, in the face of the legal authorities. Near the town of Roscommon, where, he apprehended, there was a police force, a gentleman sent his servant on horseback on business into the town; and, within one mile of that great town, at noonday, a party of persons took the man off the horse, which they killed, and told the man to go back to his master, who, they said, would be treated like the horse, if he did not comply with certain demands which they made. Again, a police barrack had been destroyed in sight of another police station; and yet no steps had been taken by the Government to punish the guilty parties. He did not blame the present Lord Lieutenant of Ireland for what had occurred; because he knew that he had done all in his power to prevent it, and he had heard of no instance in which the Irish Government did not pay immediate attention to every communication which had reached them, relative to the peace of the country. But the exertions of the Lord Lieutenant had wholly failed. When he had presented petitions on this subject during the last Session, the noble Lord then Secretary for the Colonies observed, that if he (the Marquess of Clanricarde) meant anything, he meant a Coercion Bill. Now, it was not for him to say whether he meant a Coercion Bill or not; but he was not one who would shrink from saying that he did mean a Coercion Bill, if a Coercion Bill was necessary; and he felt that, when he spoke for life and property, he was not speaking against the liberty of the subject, but in its favour—he was not speaking for class legislation in favour of the proprietors and the middlemen, and against the lower orders; for these returns, when presented, would prove that the lowest classes were the greatest sufferers from the present state of things. The poor man was the least possessed of the means of defence or flight, and if honest he must be sacrificed. It was useless to talk of ameliorating the condition of the country, and of improving its agriculture, while security of life and property, the primary and elementary step, was wanting. How could people be expected to follow an improved system when they were not free to adopt it? To illustrate his meaning, he would refer to a case which occurred in the course of the last year. A farmer who held a considerable quantity of rich grass land was ordered by the people to break up part of it, in order to grow potatoes; and he yielded to the request, in order to secure peace and quietness. The individual to whom he alluded, had been in the habit of stall-feeding a large number of cattle; but he received a communication, stating that he would not be allowed to feed his cattle in stalls this year, inasmuch as the scarcity of potatoes, turnips, &c., was apprehended. He thought it wise and prudent not to put the cattle in the stalls, because an intimation was given him, that if he did so, he would not live to eat any of the beef. He was, therefore, obliged to give up a system by which he was enabled to collect the manure of his beasts for agricultural purposes. How absurd, then, was it to talk of encouraging improved agriculture, if a man was not allowed to pursue that system which he preferred? He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) might be told that this gentleman, being above the lowest class, ought not to have submitted to such intimidation. That might be true; yet there were some men who did not listen to other suggestions than those of their own interest. But, if he were not misinformed, the individual he alluded to, did actually take considerable trouble to ascertain how far he would be sustained by the Government, if he set his face against this coercion; and he (the Marquess of Clanricarde) did not hesitate to state the fact, that persons who had been in communication with Dublin Castle gave the gentleman private advice to the effect, that upon the whole, the wisest

thing for him to do was, not to risk his property, but to give way. It was high time that something should be done for the administration of the criminal law in Ireland; and he trusted that Her Majesty's Government would speedily state their intentions, for three weeks had already elapsed since the meeting of Parliament, without any step having been taken. Perhaps he might be told that the returns would show a diminution of crime during the last few weeks. If it were not an Irish way of expressing it, he should almost say he was afraid that was the case, because he believed the absence of outrage could only be attributed to the combined law-breakers having it all their own way, and he knew that to be the case in one part of the country. The system of combination had spread to an unparalleled extent, and could only be attributed to the supineness of the Government. Many parts of the country which were before untainted, had lately become affected; and it was only by showing a determination to support those who would stand up for the laws, and resist outrages, that life and property could be protected. The noble Marquess concluded by moving for the Returns.

The EARL of ST. GERMANS did not rise for the purpose of offering any opposition to the production of the Papers moved for by the noble Marquess; but simply to inform the House that it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to lay on the Table of the House, on Monday next, a Bill, which, in accordance with the recommendation contained in Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne, was, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, calculated to remedy the evils which the noble Marquess had depicted in very gloomy, but not too dark colours. He thought that would be the proper opportunity for discussing the subject to which the noble Marquess had called the attention of the House, and would merely observe, with respect to the charge of apathy and supineness in not having more immediately introduced a measure of this nature, that it was not a light matter to set aside the authority of the law or abridge the liberty of the subject; and it was a matter deserving of deep consideration, whether the present circumstances of that country were such as to justify the enactment of extraordinary measures of that nature. Her Majesty's Government had come to the conclusion that the state of the country was such as to justify the enactment of such a law, and they were prepared to take upon themselves the responsibility of recommending its adoption. He did not think it necessary to enter into further particulars, and would merely express his concurrence in the opinion that it was the duty of the Government and of the Parliament to uphold those who were anxious to maintain order; and to repress those who were parties to the system of "organized disorganization."

LORD FARNHAM expressed his thanks to the noble Marquess for having brought the subject under their Lordships' notice; but felt bound to state that in that part of the country with which he was more immediately connected, the Government had done all in their power to assist the local magistracy in maintaining the supremacy of the law.

The EARL of CLARE concurred with the noble Lord in expressing his thanks to the Government, for the assistance which they had rendered to the local magistracy.

EARL GREY rejoiced to hear that it was the intention of the Government, on so early a day, to lay on their Lordships' Table, a Bill, for the purpose of carrying into effect those objects to which their attention had been called by the noble Marquess. He entirely agreed with his noble Friend, that, by whatever means, the security of life and property in Ireland must be established. This was, undoubtedly, the first step towards the improvement of that country; but he hoped that their Lordships and Her Majesty's Government would not delude themselves with the idea that in doing this they were doing all that was necessary. The existence of this system of agitation—of this want of security for life and property in Ireland—the existence of that extreme distress which had been produced by the accidental failure of the potato crop—all these things were but symptoms of a deep and most formidable conspiracy, which it was the duty of the Government to endeavour to put down. Mere measures of repression—mere measures of temporary relief to meet the immediate difficulty arising from the failure of the potato crop—would of themselves be utterly insufficient. They must look to the state of Ireland as a whole. There was something radically wrong in the condition of that country, or these symptoms would not perpetually recur; and until Parliament and the country were prepared to look the real difficulty in the face, and to adopt measures sufficiently large and comprehensive—not shrinking even if it should be

necessary to go against long-cherished prejudices and opinions—until Parliament was prepared to deal in this spirit and in this comprehensive manner with all the evils of Ireland, although some abatement of the disease under which she was labouring might be effected, no real, permanent, or effectual cure would be accomplished. The question had unfortunately been made too much a party question; but he hoped the time was coming when, without reference to national prejudices, every one would concur in the endeavour to devise some efficient remedy for the existing evil. He had taken this early opportunity of expressing his opinion, because he had been led to infer, from the remarks of the noble Earl, that the Bill about to be introduced by the Government was confined to the single object of endeavouring to establish better security and to repress outrage. To a measure having these objects he should be ready, under proper securities, to give his assent; but he must say that the Government would fall short of their duty to the country, if, in imposing a Bill of this kind, they were not, at the same time, prepared to lay before the House some account of their general policy with respect to Ireland.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Thursday, February 12, 1846.

Minutes.] New Members Sworn. For Buckingham, the Marquess of Chandos; for Chichester, Lord George Charles Henry Gordon Lennox.

Public Bills.—3°. and passed, Citations (Scotland).

Petitions Presented. By several hon. Members, from an immense number of places, against the Repeal of the Corn Laws; and, also, by several hon. Members, from a great number of places, in favour of Repeal.—By Sir James Graham, from Arbroath, for Alteration of Duties on Corn and Sugar.—By several hon. Members, from a great number of places, against the Government Measure respecting Customs and Corn Importation; and, also, by several hon. Members, from various places, in favour of the proposed Government Measure.—By Mr. Liddell, from the London General Shipowners' Society, against the proposed Measure respecting Timber.—By Mr. Manners Sutton, from the Board of Guardians of the East London Union, against exempting any Parties from the Metropolitan District Asylums.—By Mr. Ross, from Linen Merchants on the River Maine, against the Drainage (Ireland) Bill.—By Mr. Vernon Smith, from the Inhabitants of Brigstock, against Enrolment of Militia.—By Mr. Muntz, from Henry English, for Inquiry into Mines and Collieries.—By Mr. Greene, from Joseph John Rae, for Production of Papers respecting the North Wales Railway Bill (1845).

RAILWAY BILLS.

Lord G. SOMERSET, previously to moving the appointment of the Classification Committee on Railways, of which he had given notice, begged leave to move that the Second Report of the Railway Committee be forthwith ordered. Report considered. The following Resolutions were proposed:—

"1. Resolved—That a Committee of Five Members be appointed, to be called The Classification Committee of Railway Bills, and that Three be the Quorum of such Committee.

"2. Resolved—That Copies of all Petitions for Railway Bills presented to the House be laid before the said Committee.

"3. Resolved—That the Committee of Classification shall inquire and report what Railway Bills compete with, or ought to be considered in connexion with, any Railway Bills, the promoters of which shall have proved themselves entitled to the privilege agreed to be granted in certain cases by the Resolutions of this House of the 7th July last.

"4. Resolved—That the Committee of Classification shall form into Groups all other Railway Bills which, in their opinion, it would be expedient to submit to the same Committee.

"5. Resolved—That as soon as the Committee of Classification shall have determined what Railway Bills are to be grouped together, they shall report the same to the House; and all Petitions against any of the said Bills shall be presented to the House three clear days before the meeting of the Committee thereon.

"6. Resolved—That no Railway Bill be read a First Time later than the next day but one after the Report of the Committee on Petitions or of the Standing Order Committee on such Bill, as the case may be, shall have been laid on the Table, except by Special Order of the House.

"7. Resolved—That there be no more than seven clear days between the First Reading of any Railway Bill and the Second Reading thereof, except by Special Order of the House.

"8. Resolved—That the Breviate of every Railway Bill shall be laid on the Table of the House, and be printed and delivered one clear day before the Second Reading.

"9. Resolved—That such Railway Bills as shall have been read a First Time before the House shall agree to these Resolutions, shall be read a Second Time within seven clear days thereafter.

"10. Resolved—That such of the Standing Orders as relate to the composition of the Committees on Private Bills, and the Orders consequent thereon, be suspended so far as regards Railway Bills pending in the course of the present Session.

"11. Resolved—That Committees on Railway Bills during the present Session of Parliament shall be composed of a Chairman and Four Members, to be appointed by the Committee of Selection.

"12. Resolved—That each Member of a Committee on a Railway Bill or Bills, shall, before he be entitled to attend and vote on such Committee, sign a declaration that his constituents have no local interest, and that he himself has no personal interest for or against any Bill referred to him; and no such Committee shall proceed to business until the whole of the Members thereof shall have signed such declaration.

"13. Resolved—That the promoters of a Railway Bill shall be prepared to go into the Committee on the Bill on such day as the Committee

of Selection shall, subject to the Order that there be seven clear days between the Second Reading of every Private Bill and the sitting of the Committee thereupon, think proper to appoint, provided that the Classification Committee shall have reported on such Bill.

"14. Resolved—That the Committee of Selection shall give each Member not less than fourteen days' notice of the week in which it will be necessary for him to be in attendance, for the purpose of serving, if required, on a Railway Bill Committee.

"15. Resolved—That the Committee of Selection shall give each Member a sufficient notice of his appointment as a Member of a Committee on a Railway Bill, and shall transmit to him a copy of the twelfth Resolution, and a blank form of the Declaration therein required, with a request that he will forthwith return it to them properly filled up and signed.

"16. Resolved—That if the Committee of Selection shall not within due time receive from each such Member the aforesaid declaration, or an excuse which they shall deem sufficient, they shall report to the House the name of such defaulting Member.

"17. Resolved—That the Committee of Selection shall have the power of substituting, at any time before the first meeting of a Committee, another Member for a Member whom they shall deem it proper to excuse from serving on that Committee.

"18. Resolved—That power be given to the Committee of Selection to send for persons, papers, and records, in the execution of the duties imposed on them by the foregoing Resolutions.

"19. Resolved—That no Member of a Committee shall absent himself from his duties on such Committee, unless in the case of sickness or by leave of the House.

"20. Resolved—That all Questions before Committees on Railway Groups or Bills shall be decided by a majority of voices, including the voice of the Chairman; and that whenever the voices shall be equal, the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

"21. Resolved—That if the Chairman shall be absent from the Committee, the Member next in rotation on the List who shall be present shall act as Chairman.

22. Resolved—That Committees shall be allowed to proceed so long as three Members shall be present, but not with a less number, unless by special leave of the House.

"23. Resolved—That if on any day within one hour after the time appointed for the meeting of a Committee three Members shall not be present, the Committee shall be adjourned to the same hour on the next day on which the House shall sit, which had been fixed for that day.

"24. Resolved—That in the case of a Member not being present within one hour after the time appointed for the meeting of the Committee, or of any Member absenting himself from his duties on such Committee, such Member shall be reported to the House at its next sitting.

"25. Resolved—That each Committee shall be appointed to meet on each day of its sitting, not later than twelve o'clock, unless by the regular vote of the Committee.

"26. Resolved—That Committees on Railway Bills have leave to sit in the present Session, notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, if the Committees shall so think fit.

"27. Resolved—That every Committee on a Railway Bill shall fix the tolls, and shall determine the maximum rates of charge for the conveyance of passengers (with a due amount of luggage) and of goods on such Railway; and such rates of charge shall include the tolls, and the costs of locomotive power, and every other expense connected with the conveyance of passengers (with a due amount of luggage), and of goods upon such Railway; but if the Committee shall not deem it expedient to determine such maximum rates of charge, a Special Report, explanatory of the grounds of their omitting so to do, shall be made to the House, which Special Report shall accompany the Report of the Bill."

MR. T. DUNCOMBE said, although the noble Lord had only given notice of his intention to move the appointment of a Classification Committee, it was not his intention to offer any opposition to the Resolutions to which the House were called upon to agree. But it was his intention to call the attention of the House to one particular point, which he conceived of importance; and if his suggestion were acted on in respect of the matter, he believed it would tend very much to spare the time of all Committees on Railway Bills. It was well known to those Gentlemen who sat upon such Committees, how much of the public time was taken up in proving what was called traffic tables. One party went into a deal of evidence to show what they wanted, and another, on the other hand, to show the contrary. The most extravagant calculations were gone into, and the Committees were obliged to sit and listen to all this absurd matter. If it were expedient to make a railway between A and B, he considered that question was enough for the Committee; and they ought not to be obliged to entertain calculations as to the probable amount of traffic between those two points. Now, therefore, he would propose by way of amendment, to add to the Resolutions of the noble Lord one to this effect—

"That Committees on Railway Bills should not be obliged to consider the question of traffic, but to have power to refuse such evidence, and report such refusal to the House."

LORD G. SOMERSET hoped the hon. Member for Finsbury would not for the present press his Amendment, as that very subject to which he referred was at the present moment occupying the most serious attention of the Railway Committee.

MR. B. DENISON concurred fully in the utility of the hon. Member for Finsbury's suggestion. As Chairman of many Railway Committees, he could testify to the manner in which this evidence relative to the traffic was got up. In fact, a traffic

case could be made out of anything. He was glad the question was undergoing the consideration of the Committee; he trusted his hon. Friend would withdraw his Resolution for the present, but he fully agreed with him in the absolute necessity which existed for laying down some rule by which Railway Committees were in future to be guided in this matter.

Mr. DUNCOMBE consented to withdraw his Motion, and was glad to hear the subject was under the consideration of the Committee.

Mr. P. M. STEWART suggested the justice and expediency of having such hon. Members as did not serve on Railway Committees during last Session appointed to that particular business during the present.

Mr. GISBORNE had always said last year of those Committees that they were honest but incompetent tribunals; but as many hon. Members had obtained so much experience by their attendance on those Committees, he thought it would be a pity to let the country lose the advantage of it.

Resolutions agreed to, and Classification Committee appointed.

CAPTAIN JOHNSTONE.

Admiral DUNDAS wished to call the attention of the Government to a case which had lately excited great interest in the public mind; he referred to the case of Captain Johnstone, who had lately been tried and acquitted. It had been since reported, that it was the intention of Government to send that individual to a Colony. He hoped this report was untrue; for the man ought certainly to have been hanged. He also wished to know whether Government intended to institute any examination into the qualifications of masters of merchant vessels?

Sir J. GRAHAM said, in reference to the first question put to him by the hon. and gallant Member with respect to Captain Johnstone, who had lately been tried and not found guilty but insane, he begged to state to the hon. and gallant Officer, that her Majesty's Government had no power whatever of inflicting any punishment on that individual. It would be their duty to place him under close confinement for the rest of his days. In reference to the second question put to him by the hon. and gallant Member, he had the satisfaction of stating that the Board of Trade, by a recent regulation, had established a system of examination for masters of merchant vessels.

STAFF OFFICERS (RETIRING PENSIONS).

Captain LAYARD wished to ask the right hon. Secretary at War whether the Government had it in contemplation to make any better regulations for the retirement of staff officers, such as surgeons, quartermasters, veterinary surgeons, and paymasters? He wished also to ask, whether the medal was to be given at once to those engaged in the Chinese war?

Mr. S. HERBERT said, in reference to the first question put to him by the hon. and gallant Member, that the matter was under consideration. Considerable difficulty arose in giving the retirement contended for by the hon. and gallant Member, without encouraging similar claims from other portions of the service. He hoped, however, that some improvement would be introduced, although, perhaps, not to the extent desired by the hon. and gallant Member. With regard to the medals to be distributed amongst those who served in the Chinese war, he had been informed that the dies were made, and that the medals, 17,000 in number, would be completed in three months' time.

COMMERCIAL DUTIES.

Mr. A. STAFFORD O'BRIEN wished to know whether the Government intended to put a stop to the further circulation of a work, treating of commercial tariffs relating to America, to which the hon. Member for Bolton had referred on Tuesday evening last? He had looked over the latter portion of that book, and had found its inaccuracies so numerous, and, he must say, so disgraceful to the public officer who prepared it, that he hoped the Government would not permit it to be further circulated until these errors had been corrected. The compiler, drawing up a scheme of taxation, such as suited his own views and principles, made a mistake of 1,339,000*l.* in his calculations with reference to the duty on malt and the excise, setting down the duty for five months at 8,993,752*l.*, when any person acquainted with the commonest rules of arithmetic — any child from a parish school, could have shown the amount from his own figures to be upwards of 10,000,000*l.* It was most desirable for our own character, especially with reference to America, that some check should be put to such disgraceful inaccuracies.

Sir G. CLERK complained, that the hon. Member should have put his question without having given him the slightest intimation of his intention to make so serious

a charge. The House must be aware that it would be perfectly impossible for him or any other individual, without notice, to give an answer relative to the accuracy of every statement in a volume containing 1400 pages. If the hon. Member would have the courtesy to inform him what were the particular inaccuracies of which he had to complain, he would take care to make inquiry into the subject, and inform him whether the mistakes had arisen from accidental errors of the press, or from miscalculations on the part of the officer who had prepared the returns. The only object of compiling these statements was to obtain correct information; and he could assure the hon. Member, and all other hon. Members, that the Board of Trade would feel most grateful for information as to any errors which might require correction. In returns embracing such voluminous details it was almost impossible to guard, even with the exercise of the utmost caution, against error.

Lord SEYMOUR wished to know under what system these volumes were produced. It was of the utmost importance to all, whatever their views, that these returns should be accurate, which, under the present system prevailing at the Board of Trade, was impossible. Under any system it would be difficult to obtain correct statistical information; but it became an impossibility when facts were warped to suit particular views. He wished to have laid on the Table the original Minute under which the statistical department of the Board of Trade was constituted. It would be well if the noble Lord, who presided over that department with so much ability, would give directions to the officers connected with the statistical department to confine themselves to data and the arrangement of facts, instead of dwelling in declamatory language on the tyranny of other Governments, and casting blame on the conduct of all the Sovereigns of Europe.

Mr. M. GIBSON rose to bear testimony to the general accuracy of the works compiled by Mr. Macgregor, of which he was a student. He had tested their truthfulness, and would undertake to say that no one was more desirous than that gentleman of giving sound information on commercial matters. It frequently happened that unintentional inaccuracies found their way into these public documents; in fact, an instance just occurred to him, relating to the quantity of corn which was to be expected from the province of Tamboff. He certainly thought the hon. Member for Northamptonshire indulged in far too strong a word when he applied the term "disgraceful" to the officer by whom these returns were furnished. Some unintentional inaccuracies might be found in them perhaps; but they were, nevertheless, exceedingly instructive, and might be read with great advantage by the hon. Member and his friends.

Mr. T. DUNCOMBE had just been informed by the officer himself that the errors complained of were typographical; it was rather hard, therefore, that those intrusted with the preparation of the returns in question should not only be charged with having made miscalculations, but should also have improper motives imputed to them.

Mr. A. S. O'BRIEN said he had been misinterpreted. He had no intention of imputing motives; and if any unintentional expression had fallen from him which would bear such an interpretation, he most heartily begged to retract it. He still maintained, however, that when they paid public servants for the execution of public works, they had a right to expect accuracy.

Mr. HORSMAN said, whether the information were true or not, the hon. Member was not justified in attacking a public servant without giving him notice.

Viscount POLLINGTON apprehended the hon. Member merely meant to say that it was disgraceful that public Papers should be allowed to go forth in such a state.

Subject at an end.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE (THIRD NIGHT).

On the Order of the Day for resuming the Adjourned Debate,

Mr. COLQUHOUN said, he was going to ask the permission of the House to make a personal explanation, painful at all times, but which it was incumbent on him to make after the observations of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, who, he was ready to admit, had no wish to misrepresent his opinions, although the right hon. Gentleman had greatly misunderstood them. It would be in the recollection of the House that the right hon. Baronet had stated that he had once held opinions similar to those entertained, and, he believed, most conscientiously entertained, by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton—namely, that he wished for a total repeal of the Corn Laws, and that he

had passed from that opinion to those in favour of high protective duties, which he at present entertained. He could assure the right hon. Baronet that he was mistaken both as to the opinions he (Mr. Colquhoun) had formerly held, and those he at present held. With regard to his former opinions, no doubt the hon. Member for Durham would think him very ignorant, when he frankly avowed that with regard to the question of the Corn Laws he had ever felt it to be one of extreme difficulty. It was of all questions of political economy that which was so mixed up with many great interests of the country, that he felt perplexed in his decision, and he was unable by the exercise of his own judgment to arrive at a satisfactory knowledge of all its bearings; on the contrary, he confessed he had regarded it for many years with great doubt and anxiety. In 1841, when he was excluded from Parliament, the question of the Corn Laws came prominently before that House, and assumed a very important position. He had then given the question a careful consideration, and whatever opinions he had arrived at, he was perfectly prepared now to defend them, reviewing, as he had then done, all the bearings of the question, and fixing decisively the conclusions at which he had now arrived. But as to his having held at a former period opinions similar to those of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, this was incorrect; though it was said somewhat ingeniously by the right hon. Baronet that he had found his name in the division in 1838 with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton; and as he (Mr. Colquhoun) had voted for the Committee, he must have entertained these opinions. Now, did the right hon. Baronet forget that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, in his concluding speech, had stated that he moved for the Committee, in order to sweep into the division persons who did not agree with him, and who thought that a fixed duty was the best mode of settling the question? The same Motion was renewed in 1839; and with regard to the Motion of 1838 he would observe that he found in the same division with himself the name of the hon. Member for Sheffield, who was also the advocate of a fixed duty. But in 1839 they had precisely the same Motion made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, for which he (Mr. Colquhoun) had voted; but he would add that the noble Lord the Member for London, the avowed and most resolute champion for a fixed duty, voted for it; the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Taunton, whose sincerity in the opinions he entertained in favour of a fixed duty, no one would question, voted for it; and so did also the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Portsmouth, whose integrity and straightforwardness no one could deny. He (Mr. Colquhoun) therefore certainly could not be charged as entertaining the opinions of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, because, being the advocate of a fixed duty, he had voted for the Committee. He happened lately to find a newspaper, in which his opinions were stated as he had delivered them to the constituents he then represented in that House—the borough of Kilmarnock. Now, the hon. Member for Kilmarnock, whom he saw in his place, would bear him out, that on the question of free trade that constituency was sufficiently liberal; and as he was then asking their votes, it was obvious that, knowing their opinions, he must have been anxious to express opinions as liberal as he possibly could. That was the common *tactique* of an election. In July, 1837, he was on that occasion asked by an elector of Rutherglen, "Are you prepared to support the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws?" and his (Mr. Colquhoun's) reply was, "that he was not prepared to do so—that he had no objection to see a reduced duty imposed upon corn; but he was quite sure that it was not for the interests of the manufacturing classes, or any class of the community, that confusion should be thrown into the agricultural class; that both classes should go together, and he was not disposed to advocate a measure detrimental to the interests of both, as he thought the total repeal of the Corn Laws would be." True, he had then added that upon so difficult and perplexing a question the application of a fixed duty would be the most desirable way of settling the question; and his motive for holding that opinion was, that protection was necessary for the welfare of agriculture. That was his deliberate opinion; and he believed they never could continue protection in that country unless they obtained for it not only the support of the agricultural class, great and influential as it was, but unless they carried with them the sympathy and judgment of a large portion of the manufacturing and mercantile classes; and he founded that on his experience of that class with whom chiefly he had been connected since his entrance into public life. And when he

heard the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State dispose of the sliding-scale so easily — when his right hon. Friend told them that the sliding-scale would not slide even before they had had the experience of a bad harvest, he could not help thinking that perhaps his (Mr. Colquhoun's) earlier views of a fixed duty were better than those views which he had entertained subsequently, and which he had derived chiefly from the able speeches of his right hon. Friend and the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. So much for his past experience. The right hon. Baronet had thrown out a hint that it might be convenient to raise the question now before the House, by a proposition that protection was absolutely required for all the industry of this country. If that Motion were made, it was one which with his commercial views he frankly confessed he could not support. He believed that the views of Mr. Huskisson on that point were those of a wise and practical statesman. His views were, that they were bound to relax commercial restrictions so far as was possible, consistently with the safety of the other interests of the country. In every possible mode in which they could remove commercial restrictions and extend the trade of the country, that mode ought to be adopted; and he still maintained his opinions formerly avowed, that the right hon. Baronet, in following the steps of Mr. Huskisson, had acted rightly, and deserved, as he had secured, his support. He had not changed those opinions. When the noble Lord the Member for London referred to the authority of Mr. Huskisson, and had stated that he was rather surprised the right hon. Baronet had not cited the authority of Mr. Huskisson, the noble Lord would permit him to say that he thought in that the right hon. Baronet had shown the admirable logic he always used. That authority, great as it undoubtedly was, would not have availed him, because the opinions of Mr. Huskisson were not on his side. The system of Mr. Huskisson was this: he found that in this country they had for a long series of years levied heavy protecting and prohibitory duties upon foreign goods; and perceiving what branches of manufacture there were which could especially dispense with that protection, nay, which were rather embarrassed by it, Mr. Huskisson withdrew it from these branches; and in this respect, following his example, the right hon. Baronet now proposed to withdraw wholly from these branches the protection which they at present enjoyed. But Mr. Huskisson never applied these principles to agriculture. Perhaps he might be told, that if he had lived at the present day he would have done so. They might say so, but there was no proof of this: the authority of Mr. Huskisson did not apply to those articles which were connected with the cultivation of the soil, and which he had studiously omitted. He confessed that he saw a reason in policy both for the forbearance of Mr. Huskisson in the one case, and for the steps which he adopted in the other. That reason had been glanced at by the hon. Member for Hampshire, who had touched the argument for the removal of protection on certain manufactures, and retaining it on the products of the soil. And he appealed to the noble Lord's judgment, whether there was not a distinction at once palpable and undeniable? The noble Lord had quoted Adam Smith; but the doctrine of that great economist was, that it was not only the right but the policy of States to impose duties on foreign commodities equivalent to the taxes which were laid upon their own. That was a principle which the noble Lord would not contest. How did that dictum apply to the present case? There was an enormous amount of taxation imposed on the people of this country, which was peculiar, because it arose from a great national debt. There was a further amount of local taxation. They were in the habit of levying duties on foreign products as equivalent to those taxes. Why had they removed some branches of their manufactures from that category of protection? Because these manufactures had, in the very nature of their industry, a natural and adequate protection. No man could look at Lancashire, Warwickshire, or Staffordshire, without being struck by perceiving, that in the mineral treasures of those counties we had natural advantages against which few other countries in the world could successfully contend. Under your very feet, over the soil on which they stood, the coal and iron with which these districts abounded, gave our manufactures a large protection without the imposition of duties on foreign articles. The textile fabrics of this country need not therefore, in many of their branches, fear competition with the foreigner; but agriculture stood on a different footing. The farmers of England had to contend with seasons more variable and more severe than those of any other coun-

try in Europe; and not only had they no corresponding advantages as compared with the manufacturers, but they were also subjected to great disadvantages. The right hon. Baronet was, therefore, right in abstaining from quoting the authority of Mr. Huskisson. The right hon. Gentleman referred the House to the experience of the last three years, and he rested his case on that experience. The noble Lord the Member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon) said, and said very truly, that he thought three years too narrow a basis for such a superstructure. He (Mr. Colquhoun) went farther, and maintained that not only was the basis too narrow, but that no superstructure could be raised on it at all. It might be right to take away protection from agriculture, but not upon grounds which were not tenable in argument. Look at the argument with regard to the price of produce. The right hon. Baronet said, that he had removed the duties on the importation of animal food and live stock three years ago, and the consequence had been a great increase in the price of meat. Now, if that argument were good for anything, it would be an argument against the reduction of duty; because the avowed object of the right hon. Baronet was to cheapen food, and the result had been to enhance the price. But the truth was—and he appealed to the observation of the right hon. Baronet—when they examined how it was that the price of food had risen during the last three years, the House would perceive that it arose from causes which were not applicable to the argument, and, which, so far as they could be appealed to, rather told against the right hon. Baronet's views. One cause of the enhanced price was the agricultural panic which ensued upon the proposition of the right hon. Baronet's Tariff. The farmers believed that they were going to be flooded with oxen, sheep, and pigs; and they thought they would never find a market again in this country for their cattle. They, therefore, sold their stock at very low prices, and the effect of that was naturally, for years afterwards, to limit the supply. There were also some natural causes to be added to these. In one year there was a failure of the green crops, and in the year 1844 there was a failure of the hay and grass crops, and also the murrain, all of which tended to raise and exaggerate the price of animal food. But there was another cause of high price more satisfactory than these; one which, without disparaging the right hon. Gentleman's efforts, or depreciating the effect of his Tariff, was much more beneficial. It was a cause more powerful in its action than the Tariff, which, by stimulating employment, enabled the labouring classes to command more butchers' meat, and raised its price. ["Hear."] He perfectly understood that cheer. He must remark, however, that the Tariff, or commercial changes which had already taken place, had no connexion at all with these circumstances. No one could argue that the great development of railways, and the enormous employment that had been afforded to the labouring population by the capital embarked in these speculations, depended upon commercial legislation here. The causes that led to these results were the spontaneous exertions of the industry of the country, aided by the course pursued by the Government in leaving these matters alone, and permitting the capital of the country to develop its own resources. But this course was contrary to the opinions of a great free-trade Member of this House. The hon. Member for Inverness (Mr. Morrison) had frequently told them that they ought to interfere in railway speculation, and limit its profits. The hon. Member was a free trader, and he had again and again urged upon the House the necessity of interfering with the employment of capital in making railways. That House had, he thought, wisely, abstained from such interference, and had their reward in the development of industry and prosperity which prevailed. If there were one individual more than any other, to whom the country was indebted for this state of things, that individual was a Gentleman not to be found upon the Treasury benches. The hon. Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson), had not only been the architect of his own fortune; he could also claim the honour of having developed the industry of the country, by the application of his own great talents and skill to this subject. It was this cause above all others, which had in these three years enhanced the price of food. The argument of prices, therefore, was not one to which the right hon. Baronet could justly refer. He now turned to another point in his statement. The right hon. Gentleman had dwelt upon the subject of wages, and he argued that there was no connexion between wages and the price of provisions. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State, when he addressed the House the other night,

had thought proper to allude to the speech of the First Lord of the Treasury, which he had delivered in 1839. That speech referred to the question as to how labour was to be affected by a repeal of the Corn Laws. He must say to his right hon. Friend, with all respect for his great talents, his allusion to the speech made by the First Minister of the Crown in 1839, was not discreet, because in that same speech the right hon. Gentleman argued in his forcible and eloquent language that if they repealed the Corn Laws it would bring such injury upon the agriculture of the country as would unquestionably shake the stability of all the capital engaged in agriculture—that it would limit the employment of labour, and injure agricultural capital, as well as manufacturing industry. He might remark here, that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department disposed very shortly of all these and other arguments which he had previously used in favour of protection. He said, "I have changed my opinion, and there is an end of it." But there was not an end of it. His right hon. Friend must not forget the laws by which the words of men of genius —whether orators or poets — are bound with them. His right hon. Friend's words could not thus pass away. They were winged shafts which pierced many minds. They remained after the occasion which produced them passed away. His right hon. Friend must remember that the words which he had used adhered to the memory, moulded men's sentiments, guided public opinion. He must recollect that the armour of proof which he had laid aside, and the lance which he had wielded, and with which he had pierced many an incumbered opponent, remained weighty and entire. Greatly did he wish that his right hon. Friend were again on this side to wield them—that he were here to lead their ranks, and guide them by his prowess. But if not, they retained at least his arms; these lay at their feet, strewed all around them, an arsenal of power.

"Tuque tuis armis, nos te poteremur, Achille!"

But to return to the connexion of the price of provisions with wages. His right hon. Friend had said, and with truth, that wages followed the price of provisions at slow intervals. He gave his right hon. Friend the full benefit of that argument. Undoubtedly if they could maintain wages at the same rate whilst there was a reduction in the price of food by a repeal of the Corn Laws, the labouring classes of this country would, for a few years, be greatly advantaged by the change; but whilst he admitted that fact, he appealed to his opponents to admit with him the converse of this argument. If by any repeal of the Corn Law, they limited suddenly the employment of the people in this country, and that the market for labour became glutted by the number of labourers thrown upon it, then however they might reduce the price of provisions, wages would fall as rapidly, and the condition of the population would not be improved, but deteriorated. Let them look to the case of Ireland, where there was cheap food, but with deficient employment, low wages, and a truly wretched population. If the arguments which had been urged year after year in that House by his right hon. Friend were good—if it were true that some of the land would be thrown out of cultivation by a repeal of the Corn Laws, the effect of that change would be, undoubtedly, a fall in the price of provisions; but they might rest assured that wages would fall also, and become still lower than they were then. The population would suffer deeply even while provisions were cheapened, and the effect would certainly prove anything but advantageous to their labourers. He could not help reminding the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) that he had made the same admission himself; for he recollected the hon. Member telling the House that the effect of the Corn Laws was to keep in cultivation some soils which otherwise would have been thrown out of culture. If that position were sound—if they were by this change about to curtail the sources of labour, and to glut the labour market, then, great as might be the fall of prices in provisions, greater still would be the fall of wages, and, as a natural consequence, great suffering would be inflicted upon the agricultural as well as the manufacturing industry of the country. He would now adopt the views expressed by the hon. Member for Durham. He would proceed to admit the statement of the free traders. They said that agriculture would not be injured, and that trade would be augmented by a repeal of the Corn Laws; they told him that he ought to infer from this that the wages and the condition of the labouring classes would be improved. He admitted their premises, but he said it was impossible that he could assent to their

conclusions. He did not think that any one, however sanguine, would say that he expected so great a development of trade in consequence of repeal as had arisen during the last century in this country from various causes; and yet, with all these developments of trade, he would ask, had wages risen? That was a question which he should wish to have carefully considered He saw the hon. Member for Birmingham opposite, and he trusted he might be allowed to quote his authority upon the subject. That hon. Member (Mr. Muntz) had informed him of the rate of wages of those in his own employment. It appeared that formerly he used to sell an article for 36*s.*, which he now sold for 6*s.* The labourer received one-fifth of the price. The labour for performing this work used to cost 7*s.* and 12*s.*; it now only cost 1*s.* 2*d.* As his right hon. Friend had spoken of the improvement of the labouring classes, he could not help referring to Mr. Horner's Report, published in 1841. The extract he was referring to was taken from the statements of manufacturers, culled from their own books, and given upon their own authority. In fine yarns' spinning the fall that took place from the year 1838 to 1841 was 31 per cent., and the reduction in the wages of the spinner was 29 per cent., and in those of other workers 13 per cent. He would also quote the words of Mr. Wilson, a gentleman who was a great ironmaster in Scotland:—"Iron has fallen from 1841 25 per cent., and wages are only reduced 15 per cent., and cannot be lowered further in consequence of the duty that exists upon the importation of foreign corn." Was it not obvious, then, that Mr. Wilson expected, when the Corn Laws were repealed, that he would be able in the iron trade to lower his wages? Mr. Greg, who at one time represented Manchester, said, "By better education and more sober habits, together with cheaper food, the people will, no doubt, be enabled to live in greater comfort, and from considerably smaller earnings." So that it could not be doubted for one moment that even the free traders themselves must believe that if this Bill were carried, the wages of labour would be reduced. He did not blame the manufacturers, under the circumstances in which they were placed; for they were pressed by competition, and driven to economise and abridge their own expenses. Supported by the power of their machinery, they would be necessarily able to limit the wages of labour. Most assuredly, if the sole effect of the repeal of the Corn Laws were to reduce the price of food—if he did not see counteracting evils to spring from it—he should consider the measure to be one of great good. But, he said, if they told the working classes of this country that after the Corn Laws were repealed, they would have the same wages as before, they met those classes with delusions, the effects of which would be found by bitter experience, and the results of which would react upon themselves. The hon. Member for North Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien), in his eloquent and able speech the other night, had touched upon this point. That hon. Member had been commented on as indulging in incendiary language, and as exciting the working classes by incendiary appeals. He did not think that his statement was of that character—he was certain that it was not the intention of the hon. Gentleman so to express himself. He would, however, be careful to say nothing that could bear such an interpretation. So far from attacking the manufacturers by branding them as cruel men, who were grinding the faces of the poor, he looked at them as one great source of the wealth and prosperity of England. Living, as he did, near to a large manufacturing town, and knowing the value of manufactures in reference to his own property, he could look at them in no other light, and must at once admit that agriculture and manufactures "waxed and waned" together, and were mutually dependent; and if the effect of these measures should be to draw the landlords of this country and the manufacturing capitalists into kinder views in regard to each other's acts, thus far they would unquestionably confer a great benefit, in which he should sincerely rejoice. He believed that they did not understand each other correctly. He believed that among many manufacturers there existed a most kind and generous feeling towards those whom they employed: he only wished them to believe it equally true that the agriculturists had similar dispositions for the improvement of the condition of the labouring population. But the powers of both parties was limited—limited by causes over which they had little control. Whatever they could do in that House, he did not believe that they would be able to raise the wages, or greatly to improve the financial condition, of the people. He regretted to have heard the noble Lord the Member for London (Lord J. Russell) announce to the labouring classes, that he had every hope that this commercial measure

would improve their condition. It might do something to stimulate trade; it might have the effect of developing the manufacturing capabilities of the country; it might add to the number of their factories, and to the range of manufacturing capital; but he was greatly afraid that the pressure, on the one hand, from competition from abroad, and on the other, the pressure from the labouring people at home, loaded by their own numbers, would have the effect of depressing their wages far below the amount which humanity would award, to a standard scanty and sinking, and involving the operative in still heavier sufferings. He thought that the meaning of the appeal of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, who said, very ably and truly, that the science of national wealth was very different from that statesmanship which secured the national weal, was obvious—that they might have great wealth and affluence among the upper and middle classes, but that the condition of the labourer might be lowered instead of raised, unless they took some direct steps—not through their commercial code, but by the adoption of specific measures for the amelioration of the people. Yet when they asked the rigid disciples of political economy to join them in any of these measures—when the noble Lord the late Member for Dorsetshire (Lord Ashley) sought to limit the hours of labour for the poorer classes, they reviled and scoffed at his Motion. When the hon. Member for the University of Oxford asked them to apply sound religious instruction to the people—to tend them by the appointment of men who would watch over their moral good, and thus ensure, by the only effectual remedy, their social comfort—who would visit their homes, and endeavour to raise them in their own moral opinion, and in the habits of purer thought, he was met on the part of these same Gentlemen by an instant refusal. He greatly feared, that even if by the application of this commercial change they were to confer a brief advantage on manufactures, they would still continue in the same condition which had been described by the right hon. Baronet in 1842, of which he now ventured to say to them, that beneath their feet was a volcano of passion, ignorance, and misery, which they might look on with unconcern, but which, if they did not assuage in time, would shake the security upon which the capital of the country was built—that security without which credit was but a name. Free traders told them that in a year of deficient harvest the labourer could not purchase manufactures, and that manufactures in such seasons declined. They imagined that these evils would cease after the Corn Laws were repealed. They were in error. After this measure was passed, they would still be as dependent on the seasons as they were at present: when the harvest was abundant, trade would be brisk; and when it was defective, trade would languish. He held in his hand a circular of Messrs. Ferguson and Taylor, commission merchants in Manchester, in which the same opinions were contained. The hon. Gentleman said that he would bring in corn from abroad to remove the difficulty. But if he looked at the working of the system, he would find a more correct explanation. The hon. Member for Stockport had correctly stated the amount of exchangeable produce drawn from English soil; the same calculation had been made by Mr. M'Culloch. Put it at 200,000,000*l.*, or at 250,000,000*l.*; now a bad harvest, such as that of 1838, took $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. from the produce of England. In 1839, the deficiency was calculated at $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. That is to say, the exchangeable produce of the soil failed to the extent of from 8,000,000*l.* to 16,000,000*l.* in each of these years. But if there were a deficiency to the extent of 8,000,000*l.* or 16,000,000*l.*, it was clear that the foreign demand—great as they might choose to reckon it—could not make up for the failure that had occurred in their own produce. Rate their foreign demand as high as they pleased—assume that, after the repeal of the Corn Laws, they gained as much by the development of trade as they expected, still the manufacturers would apportion their supply to the aggregate demand of the home and foreign market; and if there was a failure in either of these, they would have the same languor of trade, the same dulness of prices, and the same difficulties among the labouring population. A deficient harvest would still, as now, produce a deficient demand, and a deficient demand would entail difficulties on the manufacturers, and depression on the labourers. He therefore frankly confessed he could not join with those who anticipated from commercial relaxation a great development of the prosperity of this country. On the one hand, while he did not think it possible to escape the difficulties which pressed on them whenever there was a deficient

harvest, on the other hand, the change proposed might bring on the country serious difficulties of another kind. What would be the effect on their colonial markets? At present the foreign trade of the country varied from 50,000,000*l.* to 60,000,000*l.* What amount of that went to their colonial market? It had risen now to 15,000,000*l.*; but did not every Gentleman see that the protection of sugar and other colonial produce was not likely long to survive the repeal of the protection on wheat? Did not hon. Gentleman proclaim that that was the hope which they entertained? And did they not look to those benches to assist them in the measure? If they were to remove all those protections which benefited their Colonies, could they keep the colonial market as a preserve for their manufactures? Would the West Indians and the East Indians endure that they should be obliged to take the English manufactures, when they could get manufactures cheaper from America? Did not the House remember the argument of the right hon. Member for Taunton, when he said that, in relaxing the colonial duties, they must take care they did not lose the colonial market? But there was another and a heavier blow which must be inflicted, because if the effect of this measure was to limit agriculture, then it would limit the demand in the home market, and the measure would produce precisely what was produced in the years 1838 and 1839, when with a deficient harvest from natural causes they had a diminished trade. They might produce—he feared they would produce—like results from the measures which they now proposed. But there was a part of that measure which struck him as above all others untenable and unsound. He would ask the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, whether he would go down to his constituents, and take that commercial code in his hand, and say—"Here is the law which we passed in 1846, and which I offer you as a complete, admirable, finished law of free trade?" Would the hon. Gentleman do that? He would not; because he found protection staring him in the face throughout various parts of this code. He found protection upon lace, upon hats, upon silks, upon china, upon earthenware, and upon metals. Then, if they left protection on these articles, on what principle did they do it? The right hon. Baronet must have a reason; there was no pressure upon him from that side of the House; he must suppose that there was none upon the other; from the agriculturists there could be no demand for keeping up the protection on silk, or upon hats, or lace, or metals, or china and earthenware. The right hon. Baronet must have preserved this, because he thought those branches of manufacture not strong enough to stand without some protection. But if they left protection at all, why take it away from that article which had been called a manufacture, but which was certainly the most delicate in the processes of its production of any If they were about to leave protection on the hardier article, why take it off the weaker? The hon. Members for Durham and Stockport had stated at public meetings that they should like to go down to Buckinghamshire, and show how they could cultivate a farm, after the repeal of the Corn Laws, on the most approved principles, in perfect freedom of trade. He heartily wished the hon. Gentlemen would make the experiment. He would engage that some of his hon. Friends connected with Buckinghamshire should give them one of the best farms in that county on a lease, a lease that should be as long as they pleased—as long as they were in Scotland, for nineteen years, at the lowest rent and most moderate charge; but on one condition, that they should show their ledgers at the end of their lease: then, if there was a break, a power of terminating the lease at the end of seven years, he strongly suspected the hon. Gentlemen would avail themselves of it. He believed the hon. Member for Durham would then be inclined to adopt the quotation made by the noble Lord the Member for South Lancashire on a former evening, and give it a free, though, as he would find to his cost, a very literal translation—

"Claudite jam rivos, pueri; sat prata biberunt;"

which, according to the hon. Gentleman's translation, would be, "Close your purses, men of Manchester, for the fields of Buckingham have drained mine." He suspected the hon. Gentleman would find, by his practical experience, the difference between the manufacture of the soil and that of the loom; that capital applied to the cultivation of the land differed widely in its results from capital applied to textile fabrics. The hon. Gentleman in his factory could take his own time, make his own temperature, raise it by his thermometer to 100 degrees, sink it at pleasure to 60; defy all changes of the weather; calculate with cer-

tainty on his returns; with perfect accuracy superintend his workmen, and apply machinery to their assistance. But in cultivating the soil, the hon. Gentleman would find that, with the best possible management, an ungenial spring might blight his hopes, a tardy summer, or, as they had had this year, a wet summer and a rainy autumn; he might have the murrain among his cattle, or rot in his potatoes; these were natural causes from which the farmers suffered, from which the manufacturers were exempt, which would teach the hon. Gentleman, in his capacity of a farmer, how different a thing it was to be engaged in the cultivation of the soil; and that if any men looked for quick and large returns on their capital, they must engage, not in farming, but in factories. He, therefore, asked the House, in common justice, if they left a protection upon some of the fabrics of the country, not to take it away from that manufacture which was the most difficult in its process, and the most uncertain in its results. Before he sat down, he was anxious to answer an appeal that had been made to him by the right hon. Baronet. The right hon. Baronet had appealed to him (Mr. Colquhoun) to say whether his opposition was founded solely upon the present measure, or whether it proceeded from a distrust of his policy upon other grounds. He would answer in all frankness that appeal. He had no hesitation in saying, that though he opposed the measure on the grounds he alleged, there were parts of the plan to which he gave his cordial assent. But he had also no hesitation in saying, that he did entertain a general distrust of the policy pursued by the right hon. Gentleman. He did not mean to assert that it might have been possible for any one to have maintained, in the difficult circumstances of the country, and against very plausible arguments, urged from the other side of the House, a high rate of protection to agriculture. That rate, like everything else, would probably have been restricted to the most moderate amount, to that which was proved to be sufficient for the protection of domestic industry. But he confessed he should have liked to have seen, on a great question such as this, a continuation, on the part of the right hon. Baronet, of those able arguments which, with all the weight of authority, station, and talent, he could have urged against the views of those opposed to him. He spoke in the absence of the hon. Member for Stockport—which, if he rightly learned the cause, he sincerely deplored—but he should say nothing that he would not equally say in his presence; in the hon. Member for Stockport the right hon. Baronet had found, since his accession to power, a most able, earnest, and eloquent opponent of the Corn Laws. A reference was made by the hon. Member for Bridport (Mr. B. Cochrane) to the Reform Bill; he did not take the same views of that measure as the hon. Member. But great as their difference might be on this subject, he did not believe, never had believed, that the difficulties of the country would have been lightened, if they had excluded from political power the great section of the mercantile and manufacturing classes. But while he held this view, he equally contended, that in acquiescing in the principle of the Reform Bill, they must meet it in the spirit in which alone it could be dealt with. It was obvious to every one that they could maintain no institution now, unless they could support it on a principle that would bear discussion; unless they could maintain it by open, constant, rational argument; unless they could appeal in its support, not to sectional interests, but to the general interest of the nation. He might be wrong in his view of the question of protection to agriculture; he held that it could be justified by plain argument, and a regard for the national interests; but every body must have seen, that since the right hon. Baronet had sat upon that bench, the principle of agricultural protection had never received from him an open or earnest defence. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, no later than 1844, had taunted them with this; he said the speech of the right hon. Baronet on that occasion was a dexterous evasion of the question, and that they had better take care, lest after such dexterous evasions the question would be surrendered. This was the fault he had to find with the right hon. Baronet, that he did not sustain the argument, he did not meet the question; nor did the right hon. Baronet meet other questions, or maintain other institutions, by an open avowal of the principles upon which he rested them, or by that strong, sustained, and vigorous defence necessary in the present day, if he would support those institutions of which he was the professed champion. It was in default of such a defence that this question had been carried—carried through a large section of the public mind; carried—for there was no denying the fact—by

the hon. Member for Stockport, by open discussion, by strong, earnest, and able appeals to popular opinion. But if he wished to see defended the great institutions of the country—institutions more vital even than the law which they were then discussing—how, he would ask, were they to be maintained? They must be maintained, if at all, in the face of an inquiring, thinking, judging community, by earnest and unequivocal avowals of the principles on which their support was based. But he found no such course taken on any one of these great questions then pending, by the right hon. Baronet. On no one of the great institutions now endangered did he find the right hon. Baronet adopt that line of defence. He had no personal antipathy to the right hon. Baronet; he entertained towards Members of his Cabinet the sincerest regard—a regard won on their side by acts of friendship and years of kindness; met on his, by the only return which he could offer them—a grateful and undiminished attachment. It was not from inclination that he opposed Her Majesty's Government; but he frankly avowed that the course taken by the right hon. Baronet did meet his opposition—an opposition which he could see no prospect of being abated or removed. As long as the right hon. Baronet remained at the head of the Government—with his talent, with his skill—but with his evasion of discussion, his declining to meet the principles upon which their institutions were either attacked or defended; so long as he remained the master spirit and presiding genius of the Cabinet, so long he could tender the Government no adhesion, he could offer them no confidence. The vote that he should give, therefore, on the Motion before the House, was not given wholly on commercial grounds, strong though these appeared to him to be, but on grounds of general policy. He wished to see the institutions of this great country preserved; and, confident that they could not be maintained in the face of the public, and on the principles of the Reform Bill, except by that discussion from which the right hon. Baronet shrank, and which the hon. Member for Stockport had on this question wisely sought; on these different but concurrent grounds he should give his decided and unhesitating vote for the Amendment of his hon. Friend.

Mr. WILLIAMS WYNN said, that in voting with those whom he had been in the habit of supporting, he felt himself separated upon this question, which had very much divided men's opinions, from several of those whom he most esteemed and regarded; and he had to lament that he had differed in opinion from a most respectable meeting of a part of his constituents; but this was a misfortune to which any man who intended to act independently and conscientiously was at all times liable. He had had the good fortune, for nearly half a century, uniformly to experience a generous confidence from his constituents, although they might differ on particular questions; and in acting as he did on this occasion, he believed that he was consulting what he deemed the interests of the country, rather than those of a particular body. His own inclinations would have led him to support any measure calculated for the protection of agriculture; but manufactures and agriculture were inseparable, and you could not act for the one without at the same time affecting the other. He had early learnt to consider the benefit of leaving questions of this kind to the Government, rather than to individuals. He was aware that it had been the policy of this country to pass laws for the protection of agriculture and manufactures; but this was not an argument which had much weight with him. Much as he respected the institutions and legislation of our forefathers, there was one point upon which he paid them very little respect, and that was, the point of commercial regulations. If he looked at the Statute Book, what did he see? A spirit of meddling with every detail, founded on the supposition that those things which were best managed by the individuals concerned, could be better provided for by the Legislature. Looking at the regulations relative to agriculture, he found them limiting the quantity of land which should be devoted to pasture or to tillage; and in reference to articles, he found, amongst other things, that the prices of wine were to be limited by the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Chancellor, and the two Chief Justices. If this practice were revived, he doubted not that a Committee would be appointed to sit for that purpose at the Cabinet dinners which were held every Wednesday. It was also enacted, that every vessel which engaged in the wine trade, should, upon every voyage, bring over a certain number of bow staves. The law required that for every tun of wine which was imported, there should be brought over ten bow staves. Thus the law did not leave the supply to be regulated by the demand, but laid down a com-

pulsory interference with trade. Many hon. Gentlemen would remember the discussion after discussion which took place before a free trade was allowed even between the different portions of our own Empire. Many discussions were had in that House, at different periods, before an importation of Irish cattle was allowed into England; which, it was declared in debate, no man could support unless he had an Irish interest or an Irish understanding. The House would also bear in recollection that it was not till towards the close of the reign of James I. that the assumed power of the Crown to grant monopolies was put an end to: it was not till then that an Act of Parliament was passed to put a stop to that practice; but the principle was not fairly acted upon until the time of Mr. Pitt, who introduced a more generous policy. Look at the propositions relative to Ireland which he brought forward—propositions, in drawing up which he was assisted by one of whom he could never speak but with the utmost affection and reverence: he alluded to the late Lord Grenville. The measure was strongly opposed, and it failed upon its first introduction; but afterwards it succeeded, and the policy was carried further at the time of the Union, when, most wisely, our shores were completely thrown open to the produce of Ireland. On the same principle, Mr. Pitt concluded his commercial Treaty with France, in the year 1787; and of both these great measures the good policy was now generally admitted; and he knew that the efforts then made by Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, were by Lord Grenville regarded to the last moments of his life as that part of his policy which he dwelt and reflected upon with the greatest pride and satisfaction. The only principle on which legislation on the subject should proceed, was contained in the short answer which had been given by the French merchants, when asked by Colbert what best could be done to advance their trade and to serve their commerce. Their answer (and it ought never to be forgotten by statesmen) was, "Pray, let us alone." When the Corn Law of 1815 was in progress through the House, he (Mr. Wynn) had voted against it in every stage; and since that time he had ever been happy to support every relaxation of the prohibitory system when introduced. He regretted that the relaxing principle had not been carried further; still he had felt the weight of the objection urged, that protection ought not to be taken from the agricultural interest at the moment they were maintaining it to the manufacturer. He admitted that that argument had considerable weight; for unfairness must always produce discontent. He thought that much relief had been given to the merchant and manufacturer by the establishment of the warehousing system; in conjunction with which, however, the sliding-scale of corn duties had existed. There was one part of that scale to which he had ever felt very considerable objection—that was, that it was based on the system of striking average prices. There never was any foundation for the averages which had guided the duty upon corn. In every article, and especially in corn, there were different qualities at different prices; and a man might as well talk of the average price of wine as of the average price of corn—in short, an average price might as well be formed from "imperial Tokay" as from "humble port." But how was the question of protection now brought forward? It was not now brought forward as an insulated measure, bearing upon one interest; but as part of a comprehensive system which extended to every point, to every trade, and to every manufacture. But it had been said, "Why, on this principle, ought any duties whatever to be paid? Why is ten per cent. to be levied at all, if this principle be good?" The answer was obvious. Duties were necessary for other purposes than protection; they were necessary for the purposes of revenue to carry on the service of the State. It had been said, that the principle of this measure being good, it ought to have been carried further, and carried to a greater degree of freedom in our commercial legislation. He should himself have been better pleased if it had been carried further; but he was willing to believe that it was not at present practicable. He believed that it was carried as far as it could be carried safely at present, and they must wait to see the effect it would produce. The hon. Member who spoke last had said, that the question was different with respect to the taking off duty on corn, and abolishing protection on manufactures and trade; that these two modes of employing capital rested upon a different basis; that while corn rested upon the seasons, trade and manufactures rested upon the constant produce of the soil peculiar to England, which afforded a greater supply of iron and of coal. Now, his opinion was, that both these branches of production rested upon our possessing a greater supply of that

which was the main support, not of particular trades and particular manufactures, but of agriculture also, namely, of capital and of enterprise which did not exist elsewhere. It was said, that agriculture could not be assisted in the same degree by means of machinery as manufactures were. He could only say that, as far as his own observation extended, he differed entirely from that opinion. He believed that the application of capital by the employment of machinery was daily taking place for the improvement of agriculture. What had been done in the great article of draining? The principal proprietors were manufacturing on their estates tiles for the purpose of draining, which they sold to their tenants and others in their neighbourhood at prime cost, not with a view to any immediate gain, but for the ultimate improvement of their property. That was a course which he believed was not likely to stop; his hope was, that the application of capital in such a direction would proceed until it had developed the agricultural resources of the country to their greatest extent. But then it was said, that it was humiliating to, and might be unsafe for, this country to be dependent for subsistence upon foreign countries, which it was affirmed would be the consequence of abolishing protection to agriculture. That, however, was an apprehension which he did not entertain. He believed that so long as it answered the interest of foreign countries to supply this country with the superabundance of their corn, they would be as anxious to encourage our buying it as we should be to obtain it from them. He remembered, during the war between Holland and Spain, the Dutch merchants were blamed for supplying the Spaniards, who were their great enemies, with their commodities; and when one of those merchants was reproached for his want of loyalty, and asked why he acted thus, his answer was, "It is my trade;" and he added, "Let me be told that there is a want of sulphur in the regions below, I should be ready to take my ship to the mouth of Acheron itself to convey a cargo of it, provided I had sufficient insurance to cover the hazard of singeing my sails." This was the principle which governed men and nations in their intercourse with each other. There were many hon. Gentlemen present who, perhaps, would remember that during the French war, even the highest antijacobins of them all never objected to take a glass or a bottle of French claret, from the fear that by consuming that article they should be affording assistance to the revenue of their national enemies. To encourage trade and the intercourse of nation with nation, must be the policy of every country; and could anybody believe that an extensive coast, whether of the continent of Europe or America, could be shut against our claims if we wanted the articles of those countries, and had the wealth to get them? He was convinced that it could not. He hoped to see the policy which was at present directed to further measures of this description, carried to a still greater extent; and, persuaded of the wisdom of that policy, and with a view to advance it, he should give the present measure of Her Majesty's Government his most hearty support.

Mr. G. J. HEATHCOTE hoped the House would allow him to say a very few words upon the very important question which was before them, and as he promised to occupy but a very little of their time, he trusted he would be favoured with their indulgent attention. In addressing himself to the question, he hoped he would, as much as possible, look at measures, and only treat of men in their public capacity, He did not appear there to attack the inconsistencies of others—he only appeared to maintain his own consistency; but in spite of all that might be said upon that subject—in spite of the levity and indifference with which some appeared to treat the question, he trusted that an adherence to professions, a plain straightforward attachment to principles, had still some value in the eyes of the people of this country. When the noble Lord the Member for London brought forward measures which he (Mr. Heathcote) believed would work great injury to agriculturists, although he was a general supporter of the noble Lord, he gave those measures his most decided opposition; and when measures more extensive, and ten thousand times more mischievous, were introduced by right hon. Gentlemen, he would give them every opposition in his power. In adverting to the question, would the House permit him to recall their attention back to what was the state of things at the end of last autumn? There never before was a time when there was such an appearance of well-being and prosperity in the country. Manufactures of all kinds were in a most flourishing condition, and even agriculture was beginning to recover from the deep wound which the policy of the right hon. Baronet in 1842 had inflicted. Well, at that time the Go-

vernment came forward with a measure which he denounced as one of the most rash and most hazardous experiments which had ever been tried in any age or any country; and it had been accompanied with the greatest change of opinion which had ever been known in the annals of political tergiversation. There they had a Government placed in power for the express purpose of maintaining the Corn Laws, professing their strong determination to do so, making speeches and declarations, such as had been read by his noble Friend the Member for Lincolnshire last night, in a House elected upon the Corn Law question, and pledged to its maintenance, coming forward with a plan for the almost immediate extinction of those laws; a Government, which turned their political opponents out of power because they came forward with a proposal of an 8*s.* duty, now came forward with virtually a 4*s.* duty, which was to cease and determine in three years. And they were told this was an equitable adjustment of the question. But how stood the case? They proposed to take from agriculture the whole protection it enjoyed at the end of three years: but when they turned to manufactures, they found a general protection of 10 per cent. retained upon nearly every species of article. They had heard from a very high authority, that they should buy in the cheapest, and sell in the dearest market; but the agriculturist was to sell his corn at free trade prices, but when he went into the market for any article of clothing, he was to find the price enhanced upon him by a protecting duty of 10 per cent. retained on behalf of the manufacturing interest. There was a still stronger contrast in the compensations, as they were called, that were to be proposed. For some time past they hed heard noblemen and gentlemen crying out, "Oh, we must withhold our opinion until we hear the proposition—some comprehensive scheme of compensation to the landed interest will be proposed—we must listen before we condemn." And what was the case now? A more miserable compensation never was offered for a great injury. He would not go into the question of the Law of Settlement, nor do more than merely allude to the amalgamation of the roads; setting them aside, what was the compensation offered? Why, Government would lend the landed interest money on good security. He believed that that interest, or any other, would find no difficulty in getting money if they had security to offer. And what was the next great compensation offered them? Why, a reduction upon clover and on onion seed, and some trifles, on which he could not speak with anything like gravity. But look at the risk of the rash experiment to which they were to be subjected, and compare it with the wholly illusory compensation with which it was accompanied. He believed that such an experiment had never before been tried in any country; it was contrary to the experience of all time in this country or in any other country similarly situated. The right hon. Baronet had told them to throw not only their consistency but their experience to the winds; but he demurred to all that, and would join issue with him, and ask him whether the three years which he had chosen to rely upon would bear him out? He (Mr. Heathcote) admitted that those years had been years of prosperity, and that crime had decreased. But all that prosperity and decrease of crime arose in consequence of the increased employment afforded to the nation by the new roads required for locomotive travelling; and he believed they were indebted a hundred times more to his hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson) for that prosperity, than to the Corn Law measure of the right hon. Baronet of 1842. There had been manufacturing prosperity, and the right hon. Baronet had ascribed it to low prices. He said that prosperity had existed with both high and low prices. In 1839, they were told by the then hon. Member for Kendal, who was also chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, that the country was in a state of prosperity, but which statement threw him up to the chin in hot water; and every one would recollect the prices were then above 80*s.* What had been the state of the agricultural interest during the last year? The right hon. Baronet would remember that a deputation consisting of farmers from nearly half the counties in England waited upon him complaining of distress; also, what took place in 1842 and 1843, immediately upon the Tariff, which created great alarm, and certainly great distress existed. Meat fell very considerably, and wheat was reduced 20*s.* a quarter: he had never known greater distress and difficulty than prevailed throughout the farming interest at that period. But was there nothing else to be considered besides the pecuniary loss which had been sustained? Were the feelings of men to be thrown out of all consideration?

Was it nothing that feelings of distrust should be raised—that a want of confidence in all public men should be created? He would tell the right hon. Baronet that there would yet be a fearful reaction in consequence of the feelings created by his measures. He said that that which it was now proposed to do was contrary to the experience of all times; nay, it was even contrary to the practice of all nations similarly situated with themselves. The right hon. Member for Wiltshire (Mr. S. Herbert) had alluded the other night to what had taken place in the year 1815, as if that was the first time that there had ever been a Corn Bill in this country: why, they had had a Corn Law for two hundred years in England. But then when the right hon. Gentleman said that that Corn Bill was an error—then he agreed with the right hon. Gentleman, and he said also, that he thought it was an error, because it forced up the prices until they became an absolute prohibition. That was a great error. He thought, with the right hon. Gentleman, that it was a great error; but a much greater error than that committed in 1815, by forcing up the prices too high, would be, in 1846, to seek to abolish them altogether. As to foreign countries, they all had a Corn Law: they were to be found in monarchical Europe and republican America. The experiment had, indeed, been once tried in Holland of doing without a Corn Law; and political economists were fond of pointing out a country in which a good system prevailed. There, however, the experiment which had been tried had failed; it had failed for some years, and they had in Holland been obliged to re-enact a Corn Law; and that, too, a Corn Law with a sliding-scale. That was the only analogous case they could discover, and there it was admitted to be a total failure. Was there, then, a strong case of public necessity to justify the measure? Was there such a state of feeling as prevailed at the time of passing the Reform Bill; or at the period when the Catholic measure was in agitation? Was there any such strong demonstrations of public feeling? No such thing. And then as to foreign nations, they would not hear of this: they would have no reciprocal treaty with England. As England relaxed, they become more stringent; as England took off its armour, they covered themselves with the panoply of protection; and they too seized upon the vantage ground which this country so unwisely abandoned. Then look at home, and derive experience from the events that had occurred, and of which they must be apprised. He did not desire to refer to what might cause the slightest irritation in the mind of any one; but let them, he said, look to the history of the last five or six years in this country, with reference to the elections that had taken place in this country; and he said that whether they looked to the general election in 1841, or to the elections subsequent to it, they would see in these, in each and in all, a complete history of the triumph of protection; and with this the unexpected and in some cases the extraordinary failures of some gentlemen who came forward as supporters of free trade. [An hon. Member: There was the election for the West Riding of Yorkshire.] As to the West Riding of Yorkshire, he said that the excellencies of his noble Friend (Lord Morpeth) as a candidate, made that an exception to the general rule. He said, moreover, that there it was the effect rather than the cause; besides, when it took place the right hon. Baronet had made his declarations on this subject; and after that declaration had divided the party of the protectionists it was not likely that they would come forward in his support. To the free traders, he said, "You have not succeeded in the great towns; you have failed in Birmingham, in Wigan, in Sunderland; you had not even the show of hands in your favour." His noble Friend the Member for London had alluded to, and admitted, these facts in his address to the city of London. What then was the state of things that existed at present? There could be no doubt but that a large portion of the people made the demand for an appeal being made to the constituency; and was there not, he asked, great reason and great justice in that demand. In 1841 they had an election; and then the cause to be decided was between free trade and protection. The electors decided for protection, and now the Parliament that they had elected was going to decide for free trade. Even, he said, if that were the case, they must, in the course of a short time, go back to their constituents: in the course of a year or two this was inevitable. He did say, then, that when he looked to the whole state of the case, he must come to the conclusion—whether he regarded that which took place abroad amongst foreigners, or whether he turned his views to home, and considered the state of public opinion—that upon no one principle could he be

led to believe that free trade would be useful to them; nor could he consider the question itself as finally settled until they found foreign nations altering their tariffs, or that they had made three-fifths of the constituents of England alter their opinions. As to famine, or the alleged famine, he must say that it appeared to him to be rather a pretext than a reason for the present course of proceeding. Upon this point he wished to state his opinions particularly. He should be most happy, in case it was necessary, to relieve or alleviate the distress existing in Ireland; he should be most happy in that case to give his assent to any measure calculated to effect that object. That was a sentiment, he was sure, that not only prevailed generally in that House, but he could say, it was that also entertained by his constituents; for, at a very large meeting of them which was held a few days ago, and at which were present as steady protectionists as were to be found in any part of the country, he had told them that if any measure were proposed, calculated to relieve the distress in Ireland, he should be happy to give it his support; and so far was that declaration from being ill received, that it was greeted with cheers and applause. He said, then, that if measures were to be brought in for the relief of Ireland, why not bring in measures that would give relief at once? Hunger would not wait—starvation could not pause for discussion; nor were its pangs to be soothed by long debates. Nothing could be more delusive than that the distress of Ireland now was to be mitigated by a repeal of the Corn Bill, which was not to come into operation for three years. If there were local distress, provide for it a local remedy; but let them not, because there was local distress—let them not, because there was a temporary evil, alter a general law which regulated a great and mighty Empire. If they would not continue their Corn Laws for England, then, he said, maintain them for Ireland. England had many sources of wealth—Ireland had but two, her agricultural produce and her linen trade, both hitherto highly protected. Continue, he said, both, for the sake of Ireland; and do not buy corn from Denmark, and linen from Germany, instead of purchasing both, as they ought to do, from their fellow citizens in Ireland. As to the mooted question of there being a famine in England at this moment, he said it was contradicted by the price of food. He asked any man if he could call 56*s.* a famine price? When the right hon. Baronet introduced his Bill in 1842, he said, that the object of it was to keep the prices between 54*s.* and 58*s.*, and on the very day he brought forward these measures the price was 56*s.* Immediately after harvest corn sold at a low price, and (as we understood the honourable Gentleman) his answer to the objection that the averages were affected by the low prices, was, that light grain was sold both by weight and measure—a fact that must diminish the effect, if it did not destroy the argument of the right hon. Baronet. They had, he knew, famine in the newspapers—they had famine in the speeches of Cabinet Ministers; but they found abundance in the markets. The cry of famine was a pretext; but it was not the reason for these changes. He wished now to be permitted, for a few moments, to address himself to the abstract question. He thought before that House determined upon abolishing the Corn Laws, they should see whether the present Corn Law did not furnish every check that they could desire—whether it had not aided in maintaining a steady, equable price; in preventing the extreme either of low price, which would ruin the agriculturists, and also preventing the scarcity of famine, which they must incur if they trusted entirely to foreign nations. Now, if they took off all restrictions, they would always have too much corn or too little. In bad years, at home and abroad, they would find foreign nations keep their surplus to themselves. The English people would then have to go without the corn of foreigners, and they would be exposed to scarcity and famine. On the other hand, if there were good harvests at home and abroad, there would be a surplus and a glut. In point of fact the surplus would be different from that which had taken place hitherto, because foreign nations did not grow for the English market in consequence of the extreme uncertainty of the sliding-scale. That was his argument. [*Cheers from Members on the Opposition benches.*] He agreed with hon. Members who cheered him, that there was uncertainty attached to it. The foreigner did not know what the duty might be, for instead of 20*s.* duty it might be 1*s.*; but the moment that there was a certainty, then they would grow much more largely for our markets. Then also they should be the only nation without a Corn Law; and as all other nations would have one, then all the corn in the world would come to this country. Hon. Gentle-

men said that would be "abundance." He was, he could tell them, for "abundance and plenty;" but he was not for "superfluity" and a "glut." What he called "agricultural distress" was with them a cheap price of food. What they called a "manufacturing distress," he might term "a cheap price of clothing." Did they mean that both were good? ["Hear, hear," *from Members on the Opposition benches.*] Then the distress of the two halves was, according to them, a great benefit for the whole. He had now to observe upon the speeches made by the right hon. Baronet the Member for Dorchester, and the hon. Member for Winchester (Sir J. Graham and Mr. S. Herbert); the one said the prices would not be lower than they were at present; and the other, that he did not know where the foreign corn was to come from. He would tell them where it would come from. He did not now go into the question of America, but he could tell them that corn would come from the north of Europe. They could procure corn just as easily from Hamburgh as from Boston; from Denmark as from Lincolnshire or Yorkshire. The hon. Member for Boston said, that it could be brought much cheaper from Hamburgh than from Boston; for let them remember that they had a monopoly of their coasting trade. Let them, he said, recollect, too, that the nations in the north of Europe took but a small portion of their manufactures; that they could undersell the United States; and then they would be placed in this situation, that they would be buying corn from nations that did not want to take their manufactures, and sending their manufactures to nations whose corn would be undersold by other parties. Now, when they were about to make a great experiment in this great agricultural country, let them see what were the prices that existed in the north of Europe. He might be here permitted to allude to a table of prices which had been referred to by him four years ago, and that could not be contradicted. That was a table of prices of corn in Denmark; they were not picked out a single year, they were kept in Denmark, and not made up for a particular purpose. That table he did not bring forward at any protection meeting, because he wished to state it in the presence of those who could contradict it, if it were possible to be contradicted. That was a table of the prices of Danish corn for twenty-five years—that was from 1815 to 1840. That table gave an average price of 28*s.*; and the average for the last seven years was 25*s.* They would recollect that the point he made at present was, that when they had a good harvest at home they would have a glut and a superfluity. Now, he found that for seven consecutive years the price of corn was 18*s.*—the lowest price in these tables was 16*s.*; but for seven years in Denmark the price was only 18*s.** But then hon. Gentlemen might say that Denmark was a small country, and that they could not send any great quantity of corn from it. He believed that the price that prevailed in Denmark was the same as that which would be found to prevail in the whole of the north of Europe. By a Parliamentary Paper laid before that House, he found a return given of the lowest prices and highest prices in the north of Europe; and to this point he begged to draw the attention of the Vice President of the Board of Trade. He found there the lowest prices stated to be, in Prussia Proper, 16*s.*; in Holland, Brandenburgh, and Pomerania, 17*s.*; in Silesia, 18*s.*; in Saxony, 22*s.*; in Dresden and St. Petersburgh, 22*s.*; in Riga, 20*s.* He asked them whether they were prepared to look at the state of things that would arise when an immensity of foreign corn would be brought in and sold at these

* The following is the table referred to by the hon. Member.

An Account of the Price of Wheat in Denmark and in England, compiled from the Consular Returns presented to Parliament in 1841. Ordered to be printed April 7, 1843:—

	ENGLAND.		DENMARK.	
1815	65*s.*		36*s.*	
1816	78*s.*		36*s.*	
1817	96*s.*		57*s.*	
1818	86*s.*		43*s.*	
1819	74*s.*		33*s.*	
1820	67*s.*		26*s.*	
1821	56*s.*		18*s.*	
1822	44*s*		19*s.*	
1823	53*s.*		20*s.*	
1824	63*s.*	*	16*s.*	*
1825	68*s.*		17*s.*	
1826	58*s.*		18*s.*	
1827	58*s.*		21*s.*	
1828	60*s.*		27*s.*	
1829	66*s.*		39*s.*	
1830	64*s.*		34*s.*	
1831	66*s.*		39*s.*	
1832	58*s.*		32*s.*	
1833	52*s.*		20*s.*	
1834	46*s.*		18*s.*	
1835	39*s.*		19*s.*	
1836	48*s.*		25*s.*	
1837	55*s.*		25*s.*	
1838	64*s.*		36*s.*	
1839	70*s.*		38*s.*	
* Average, 57*s.*			Average, 18*s.*	

prices? They had been told that when the times were bad a corn law was of no use. It was not correct to say that, for when they referred to the year 1822—a year of great agricultural distress—when the price of wheat in England was 44*s.*, in Denmark it was 19*s.* If they were then badly off, how much worse might they have been if it were not for the Corn Laws? Again, in 1835, when the price here was 39*s.*, it was in Denmark only 19*s.* If they had not a Corn Law, and prices fell from 57*s.* and 58*s.* to 34*s.* or 35*s.*, he asked them how they were to arrange with the farmers as to the payment of rents, or what rents were they to determine upon? He felt, however, that he had too long trespassed upon the attention of the House. He thanked them for the very kind manner in which they had listened to him; but, looking to the measures now before them, he said that those who proposed them, had taken upon themselves a very great and very grave responsibility, and little less would be the responsibility of those who suggested it. Whatever they did, he should continue in the same course he had ever pursued. If he succeeded in throwing out the Bill, he should consider that he had done the country good service. And if he could not do that, then he had the consolation of reflecting that he had acted upon principle; that he had broken no pledges; that he had kept to the professsions he had made; and acted in accordance with the wishes of his constituents, and for the best interests of his country.

MR. WYKEHAM MARTIN: After the pointed observations which my hon. Friend, who has just sat down, made, both in the commencement and in the close of his speech, with respect to tergiversation, I feel it necessary, as one of those who have hitherto supported protection, both in this House and elsewhere, and who now am about to support Her Majesty's Government, to trouble the House with a few words of explanation. I feel, however, that I have a much smaller amount of explanation to make than most of those who are similarly circumstanced, because it has been as a temporary system, and not as a permanent one, that I have supported it. It has always been my opinion that a time would come, when, by a gradual subsidence of prices here, and by a rise of prices abroad, we should arrive at a point at which the transition from a system of protection to one of free importation, could be safely made. I have always maintained, that when that time should come, the transition ought to take place. I will freely avow that that time has come sooner than I expected:—and this avowal is all that is necessary to reconcile the whole of my political conduct—to account for my supporting protection formerly, and for my not supporting it now. Sir, I am glad that I caught your eye at this moment, for it happens that the few materials I have prepared to lay before the House have reference to the subject of this concluding part of the speech of my hon. Friend who has just sat down. He has mentioned very low prices of grain as prevailing in the ports of the north of Europe, from which we derive our supplies. But in the very figures with which he accompanied his statement, he has given indications of the reason of those low prices. He has given the parallel prices in the English market, and it will at once be seen, by those very prices, that there was no demand from this country. He stated that those countries did not grow corn for the English market; but, if I am at all correctly informed, the very reverse is the case. They are not eaters of wheat—they live upon rye—and it is for the English market that they grow wheat. When there is no demand from us, there is no demand at all; and it is not uncommon, under those circumstances, for wheat to be sold for little more than half the cost price. The remunerating price at Warsaw is stated by Mr. Jacob to be 28*s.* a quarter; and he was informed by one of the Ministers of Poland, that it was sometimes sold for 14*s.* 9*d.*, being very little more than half its cost. I think it of the utmost importance that we should form an accurate estimate of the price at which corn is likely to be brought into the country. I think it is the very point upon which the whole of this discussion turns; and therefore I have occupied the whole of my leisure, in the interval which has been allowed us, in refreshing my memory as to the information which was laid before us in 1842, and in obtaining the best fresh information to which I had access. In estimating the probable price of corn, we shall not arrive at a correct conclusion by taking the average of a long series of years, because in this will be included the years in which there is no demand from this country. Neither shall we do so by taking an average of the different ports from which the importation is made, as I have usually seen the calculation made in the treatises I have met with on the corn trade. It is

the last bushel we have to buy that regulates the price of the whole quantity. It is the price of the most expensive market to which we are driven for the supply of our necessities. And this will probably be Dantzic, for I think my hon. Friend (Mr. Heathcote) was right when he said that America would be undersold by the North of Europe. It was calculated, in the discussions of 1842, that American corn was, on the average, dearer than European by at least 2*s.* a quarter. Now, the remunerating price of wheat at Warsaw is stated by Mr. Jacob to be 28*s.* a quarter; and the charges of bringing it to England, he states to be 20*s.* more, making together 48*s.* a quarter. And this estimate is remarkably confirmed by the experience of the Channel Islands. It will be in the recollection of the House that the Channel Islands have the privilege of exporting their own produce to this country duty free, and of importing from foreign countries corn for their own consumption without payment of duty. I have referred to a return of the prices for the last four years; and I find that the price has been, on the average of those four years, 48*s.* at Guernsey, and 50*s.* at Jersey; in the one case, the very sum named by Mr. Jacob, and in the other 2*s.* more. Now, the natural tendency of an increased demand is to raise the price, and I do not believe that we shall ever see wheat sold in this country, on an average of ten years, at a price much, if at all, below 50*s.* a quarter. We have an effective demand for all the corn which we grow, and for all that we have hitherto procured from all parts of the world, at a price which may be called 55*s.* or 56*s.* Nothing can knock down that price but a very large and a very sudden increase of the quantity. It is not because a man buys a quarter of corn in Denmark for 26*s.* that he will sell it, if the price be 56*s.* in Mark-lane, for anything short of that sum. It, therefore, becomes of the last importance that we should form an accurate judgment upon this point, whether it is or not probable that foreigners will be able to inundate the market with a large quantity of cheap corn in a short time. Now hon. Members must not be led away by the supposition that they have to compete with a set of intelligent farmers on the other side of the water, who set to work by their capital intelligent and industrious labourers: such is not the state of society in the north of Europe, from whence we derive our supplies. The mode in which the cultivation of the soil is carried on in Russia, Poland, Prussia, and the north of Germany, is accurately described by Mr. Jones, the Tithe Commissioner, in his valuable work on rent, and also by Mr. Jacob, in his two reports of 1826 and 1827. The system is that which is termed by Mr. Jones that of labourrents:—the landowner retains in his own hand the bulk of his estate; the remainder he gives out to his semi-barbarous serfs, in quantities of forty or fifty acres, on condition that they work three days in the week for him, and the other for themselves. Is this a state of things in which anything like energy is to be expected? Mr. Jacob gives this description of the population of Poland:—

> "The labouring classes too, being assured of a supply of the bare necessaries of life, are little disposed to any great changes in their mode of work, or any exertion of strength or skill beyond that to which they have been accustomed. They have been, and perhaps not without some reason, always represented as indolent, unskilful, filthy, and drunken, and averse to the improvement which their wiser and better superiors have attempted to introduce."

In fact they are so brutalized, and in so low a moral and intellectual state, that when they were released from the condition *adstricti glebæ*, and made free men in Livonia and Esthonia, and part of Prussia, the measure was so unpopular with them, from the fear that they would no longer be maintained in sickness and old age, by their former lords, that they rose tumultuously against the edict, and freedom was absolutely forced upon them at the point of the bayonet. Then again we are told of the unlimited fertility of the country. The account given by Mr. Jacob is this:—

> "With that description of persons [those qualified to judge], including the chiefs of several departments of the Government, the prevailing opinion was, that the average produce of wheat was not more than 14 bushels; of rye, 10; of barley, 14; of oats and of buckwheat, from 8 to 10 to the acre. Although the southern parts of Sandomir and Cracow yielded rather more, yet their corn, being celebrated for its excellent quality rather than for its much greater produce, and extending to but a small proportion of the whole corn of these provinces, it was not calculated that it would have the effect of raising the average of the whole kingdom in any sensible degree above the rate here stated."

Of Sandomir, Mr. Jacob says—

> "The wheat grown here is that which is known in London by the name of Dantzic white wheat; it is of the most excellent quality—very white and heavy. I did not learn that the average growth was much beyond, if it reached, 20 bushels to the acre; though I heard individual instances of a greater quantity being yielded in good years. The district is about sixty miles in length, but not

broad." "This tract of country, which appeared to me so fertile . . . . does not, including the territory of the republic, in extent amount to one-sixtieth of the present kingdom of Poland."

But wheat cannot be grown continually without manure to renovate the soil. Now there are no cattle in the country to furnish manure. Mr. Jacob gives this table of the proportion of acres to the cattle, for we cannot say of cattle to the acre:

	Prussian Maritime Provinces. Acres.	Polish Province of Plock. Acres.
Horses and colts	1 to 42	1 to 106
Oxen, cows, & calves	1 to 18	1 to 24
Sheep and lambs	1 to 10	1 to 24
Swine . .	1 to 35	1 to 52

He also gives the quantities on an estate in the province of Lublin, which is said to be one of the best managed in the kingdom of Poland:—

1 cow or ox	to	26¾ acres.
1 sheep or lamb	to	19
1 horse	to	156
1 pig	to	146

And as to capital, a statement is given of a plan that was arranged with a view to relieving the embarrassment which generally prevailed amongst the proprietors, by what was termed a land-bank. But it is said all these things will come by degrees. Now, it must be remembered that the progress of agricultural improvement is extremely slow. It is not with the agriculturists as it is with the manufacturers. They live at a distance from each other, and have few opportunities of communication. It is a long time before it can be ascertained whether an experiment is really successful. If it appears to succeed, it may owe its success to a favourable season. If it appears to fail, it may be an unfavourable season that has caused its failure. The manufacturers are collected in one spot. Every new invention is at once known to all; and it is known immediately and certainly whether an experiment has succeeded or failed. The spirit of rivalry is constantly in operation, and improvement proceeds with great rapidity. The inhabitants of the country districts are also very averse to change; they like to go on in the old ways; and even in this country it often takes a generation before an improvement is fully introduced. How much more slow is the progress likely to be in a semi-barbarous state, like that which I have been attempting to describe? We were once in the same condition ourselves; and I believe that it will take those nations at least as long as it has taken ourselves to emerge from that state—and it will be in the knowledge of many hon. Members that a man was adjudged in our courts to be a serf or villein so late as the reign of James I. As to the probability of an increased supply from those nations, taking them in the state in which they are at present, there are Returns before the House which were furnished by the consuls at the different ports for the debates of 1842, by which it appears that the whole quantity likely to be furnished by them, including probable increase, is 2,225,000 quarters. Now, it will be seen, that our annual average importation, for the last four years, has been a fraction more than 1,900,000 quarters; and this quantity is within very little more than 300,000 quarters of the greatest amount at which the probable yearly supply from all quarters had been estimated. There are some persons who urge against the proposition of the Government the apprehension of a large influx of corn from America; but I cannot see any ground for such an opinion. By the Consul's returns for 1842, it happened that, taking a series of ten years, the price of wheat was for either three or four years of the ten, higher at New York than in London. And by a return which has just been placed in our hands, it appears that the price at New York was 40*s.* a quarter on the first of last November. It has also been stated that corn can be grown in Michigan for 15*s.*, and even 14*s.* a quarter, and conveyed from thence to this country at a very low rate. I have been informed by a gentleman of eminence who is connected with Canada, and upon whose information I can implicitly rely, that there was a large crop last year, and that the price for which it was actually sold in Michigan was 24*s.* a quarter. It was also observed by Lord Ashburton very recently at a protection meeting in Hampshire, that American corn can at this time come here through Canada at a duty of 4*s.*, and yet with a price of perhaps 70*s.* for corn of good quality, none is coming. A remarkable fact was also mentioned the other night in the able statement of the Secretary at War—namely, that the export of corn from the United States has been decreasing for the last 50 years. Now I would ask, if it be true that corn can be grown so cheaply in the back settlements of America, and conveyed so cheaply to this country, how is it that it can bear so high a price at New York and the more populous districts of the Union? Surely the American dollar is as effective a stimulus to exertion as the English sove-

reign; and if they could really supply us so cheaply, they could supply at the same rate their own countrymen. I am more disposed to rest my judgment—and I think that this House ought also to base its decision—upon established facts such as I have brought forward, and the reasonings deduced from them, than upon the estimates of mercantile men, however eminent they may be. There is nothing so little to be trusted as an estimate. However carefully it may be made, there are a thousand lets and hindrances which prevent the accomplishment of that which seems most plausible on paper, and upon these grounds I feel as little disposed to anticipate a ruinous influx of cheap corn from America, as I do from the north of Europe. Sir, it is also said that, even if we adopt the measure which has been proposed, wisely as I think—unwisely as is thought by many of my Friends—by Her Majesty's Government; there will be no reciprocity—foreigners will not follow our example. I believe that it is for the interest of our agriculture, now that the transition can be made with safety, that it should be placed on a natural, instead of an artificial basis. I believe that it is also the interest of our commerce so soon as the change can be made without a ruinous derangement of existing interests, but more particularly of the labour market, that it should be placed on a sound and healthy footing, whether foreign nations choose to follow our example or not. And if this country, which is confessedly at the head of the commerce of the world, shall lead the way in the adoption of sound principles—if, having done so she shall flourish, as I believe she will, with a vigour which she has never yet known; then at length will foreign nations, seeing that this is the way to commercial greatness, imitate our example, and follow in our steps. It is true that this will not take place immediately: it may be twenty, or it may be thirty years; and many of us who are here may not see the day. But what are twenty or thirty years in the march of a nation? We are not legislating for ourselves, but for our children, and our children's children. And I for one shall not grudge—I shall not shrink from—any reasonable amount of temporary sacrifice to lay the foundation of a great and an enduring prosperity.

MR. T. BARING said, upon the subject under discussion, and upon some others, he regretted to say he had the misfortune of differing from friends upon whose sound judgment he had the greatest reliance, and for whose integrity and purity of motive he had the strongest respect. He also had the misfortune, on the present occasion, to differ from the Members of a Government whose policy he had hitherto followed, and for whose talents, knowledge, and administrative powers, he had the highest admiration; and in whose patriotism and stern sense of duty, even in the course which they were now following—a course which appeared to him mistaken and inconsistent—he was anxious to express his firm belief. It was, therefore, with pain that he should give the vote which he meant to give on this question. But feeling, and allowing the sincerity of the Government, he could not change his mind to give a different vote, unless he saw strong grounds for changing his opinion; and with every deference for the authority of the right hon. Baronet, whose change had carried to his (Mr. Baring's) mind motives for deliberate consideration, he must say that the grounds upon which the right hon. Baronet had rested his change of opinion and policy appeared to him totally inconclusive. Had they been called upon to change their policy upon the general reasons hitherto given, he should have found, he thought, an answer to them in the views which the right hon. Baronet formerly had so strongly and clearly expressed on the propriety of caution and discretion in introducing great changes of the nature of that now propounded. But when that change rested upon two such grounds as the success that had attended the modification of the commercial system during the last three years, and the danger which must result from the total failure of the harvest—he must say, that having examined both these grounds to the best of his judgment, though he saw in them many reasons for the continuance of a system of gradual relaxation of commercial restriction, and grounds founded upon the necessities of the country for a temporary measure, yet he must say they all appeared to him inadequate to justify those who had believed in the soundness of the right hon. Baronet's previous policy, in deserting that policy. Even if he could believe that the prosperity of the last three years could be attributed to the relaxation of the Tariff, still this would be an argument for a cautious, deliberate, and gradual relaxation, and not for so great a change as was now proposed. The very argument made use of by the right hon. Baronet, with respect to the introduction

of foreign cattle, showed the danger which would result from apprehensions that might arise, however ill-founded. And when a reason for the present change was sought in the increased consumption of articles the duty on which was lowered by the Tariff, he must be permitted to say that there had been an equal increase in articles the duty on which had not been changed by the Tariff. He did not object to those changes in the Tariff; he approved of the great majority; but they were carrying the argument in a wrong direction when it was said that the prosperity of the last three years mainly depended on those changes. They were told that the great cheapness of bread had been the cause of this prosperity; but he thought that the prosperity would have been much lessened if there were a less demand for labour; as he thought the increased prosperity had arisen from the greater demand for labour caused by internal improvements, and from the activity of trade. He believed that the rate of wages was regulated by the supply and demand for labour. There was a high remuneration for labour in America, where food was cheap, and a low remuneration in Poland, where food was also cheap. It appeared, then, that there was no positive connexion between the two; but if they diminished the demand for labour with an increasing population, the result would be, that the rate of wages, with the increased competition of labour, must be regulated by the prices of food. He could not bow, therefore, to the opinion that the last three years of prosperity, gratifying as it had been, creditable as it was to Her Majesty's Government, and satisfactory as it had been to the country, could justify this great experiment in an agricultural country, which shook the confidence of all interested in the agriculture of the country, and opened a future which no one could define. The next ground given for the intended change was the result of the harvest in this country and in Ireland. No one could view the possible calamity in Ireland without sympathy and alarm. It appeared, however, to him that the reports as to the disease in the potato crop might be exaggerated; the growth of potatoes and oats was unusually large, and he had hoped that the supply would be large also; but when Her Majesty's Government stated their apprehensions that such a supply could not be relied on, he was sure that they did not overstate the case when they said that they looked to Ireland with apprehension. Still this was a special case, requiring a special remedy: it was not from such accidental circumstances that they ought to make a total change in their system. By this measure, the property and the income of the persons to whom the distressed parties ought to look for employment and benevolence would be reduced. He did regret to hear the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department say he thought no Minister of the Crown would be justified in affording relief to the starving population of Ireland unless he acceded to a repeal of the Corn Laws. When had this country ever shown itself backward in affording relief? He had heard calumnies against a Saxon Parliament and a Saxon nation; but he had never heard such a calumny as that they would suspend all relief till a great commercial change should be perfected. The right hon. Baronet had said it would require a bold man to do it; it would require only a patriotic Minister. If he had made a proposal for relief, without accompanying it with an alteration of the Corn Laws, he would have found a Parliament to back him. The noble Lord the Member for the city of London had last Session moved for a return of the quantity of corn in bond, and it was shown to be only 450,000 quarters; but though the stock of bonded corn might be small, our real supply rested on our stacks and granaries; and even if there were alarm because the quantity in bond did not exceed 450,000 quarters, there was this satisfaction, that it had now increased to a million. When, however, alarm was excited, every party was anxious to exaggerate the evil arising from the smallness of the supply. He believed that the crop of barley and oats was peculiarly abundant; the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department made that a crime in the present sliding-scale which its proposer looked upon as its great merit—it prevented fraud; and because the present sliding-scale did prevent fraud, he believed that the speculators said they must resort to another sliding-scale—to the sliding-scale of Ministerial nerve and Ministerial consistency. Then they were told that the ports of England would be swept to supply foreign States; but under 100,000 quarters had been sent to Belgium and Holland, whilst there had been a great addition to our store here. Then they were told also that there would not be a sound potato by Christmas; and that the supply of corn would be diverted

to Belgium and Holland, which had been wholly erroneous. It was said also that the whole of the rice was purchased at Liverpool at a high price; and the right hon. Gentleman would be happy to hear that there had now been a fall of 25 or 30 per cent. No one, however, had attempted to allay the fears that had been excited, and which all had set in motion. That portion of the public press which was against the Government and the Corn Laws—against everybody and everything, had declared that starvation was at their doors. The gentlemen of the Anti-Corn-Law League made it their theme; and the noble Lord the Member for London had given a sanction to the alarm, because on the ground of that alarm he had written his letter, to make at once a clean conscience and a united party by confessing his previous errors. Yet, on reviewing what had taken place, he must think the great want of the country had been the want of a Ministry, and that the most appalling scarcity had been the scarcity of statesmen ready to sit at the same Council table. He was the more inclined to that opinion, when he recollected that the right hon. Baronet, in introducing his commercial changes, had said, that looking to the state of the manufacturing districts, the prosperity which had lasted during the first nine months of the year was liable to sudden and immediate change; and when also he had referred to a circular which seemed to have made a great impression upon the right hon. Baronet's mind, and which had made a similar impression upon his (Mr. Baring's) mind, the right hon. Baronet had read an extract which showed that there had been great anxiety at the end of last year through fear of a depression in the trade of Manchester. He (Mr. Baring) need not read the paragraph, because what fell from the right hon. Baronet must be fresh in the memory of all; but the tendency of it was to show that there was great alarm lest the prosperity which had prevailed should experience a check. The right hon. Baronet had only wished to state that there was great anxiety on the subject; but when he (Mr. Baring) wished to account for that anxiety he might be allowed to read an extract also. It was from the circular of Messrs. Gibson and Ord, most respectable merchants of Manchester, dated the 22nd of January. The circular stated that the alarming accounts respecting the failure and disease of the potato crop had caused such excitement that meetings were held all over the three kingdoms to devise means for mitigating the impending evil, and to petition Government to open the ports; that this excitement acted upon the money market; and that circumstance, together with the railway crisis, which all prudent men had looked upon as inevitable, had deranged the general trade of the country, the evil being completed by the unexpected announcement of the resignation of Ministers; that experience had shown that the first cause of alarm was greatly exaggerated; that subsequent returns proved that the average yield of the corn crops was not much deficient, while there was at the same time a supply from the surplus of the preceding year; and that though there had been extensive loss in the potato crop, the public mind was relieved from great anxiety on that point, which result they attributed to the wisdom of the advisers of the Crown, who had withstood the overpowering demands that had been made to them to open the ports, the sudden compliance with which would unquestionably have led to great embarrassment. With respect to the policy of the Corn Laws, they said—

> "The apprehension of a present scarcity prepared the minds of all men for it, and our position with regard to food imperatively demands that provision, to the utmost possible extent, should be made against a calamity which has often come upon us, and may again, when the ports of Europe may be closed against us. To the United States, in such contingencies, we must mainly look for our supply. But while we admit this, we do not advocate the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. To such a measure is opposed the conviction that it would be unjust towards the landed interest, and produce such a revolution in our monetary and commercial affairs as would be most pernicious to the industry of the country. But we recommend a moderate fixed duty, with a gradual reduction until it is entirely abrogated."

When he quoted this document, proceeding from parties who were opposed to the present Corn Laws, and preferred a fixed duty; who stated that the aspect of affairs was much exaggerated, and there was no cause for opening the ports, it should be remembered that he quoted a document to which the right hon. Gentleman himself had given the stamp of his approbation; perhaps, also, it was one which offered some explanation, though none other had been given, of the opposition of the right hon. Gentleman's Colleagues to his proposal for opening the ports. In his humble opinion nothing could have been more injurious than opening the ports. If the previous apprehensions were such that everything in our ports that could be

bought was eagerly purchased, the further alarm of such a measure must have had the effect of shutting foreign ports against us. In his opinion, therefore, nothing could be more ill-timed than such a measure. He confessed, therefore, he saw no ground, either on account of the effect of our previous legislation, nor of the existing circumstances of the country, to call for such sudden and sweeping measures as the one now before the House. He must, therefore, look at the measure by itself, and judge of it by present circumstances. He feared the right hon. Gentleman did not entertain so strongly as formerly his opinions of the great importance of a surplus revenue over the expenditure. It seemed to him, without going into the financial statements which were not yet before them, that when the right hon. Baronet was proposing an augmented charge on the Consolidated Fund of half a million, and making additions to the military and naval service, while at the same time he was diminishing the revenue by the remission of taxation, unless he calculated upon a greatly increased revenue from corn, he was risking, by a calculation on the continuance of the great prosperity which had existed for the last few years, that permanent surplus revenue which he believed to be essential to the credit and welfare of the country. He was anxious to state that he was not one of those who thought that protection ought to be indiscriminately applied to all articles, or permanently maintained upon any. It was the necessity of the case, which, in his opinion, alone justified protection. A protective duty, like a revenue duty, was, *per se*, an evil, which necessity alone could justify. At the same time he could not agree that protection should be regulated by one uniform system; that because free trade was desirable in one case, it should be applied to every one. Each interest must be looked at upon its own special case, and with reference to the capital invested, and the labour employed in it. He believed that where by legislative authority protection had been enjoyed for a long time, the principle of Adam Smith, which was applied by Lord John Russell, some time ago, to land as well as to manufactures, was the one which should be adopted, namely, that the advance towards freedom of trade required slow gradations and a great deal of circumspection. That was his own opinion. As regarded the Corn Law of 1842, he did not look upon it as a final measure; he did not look for finality in any legislation, and least of all in commercial legislation, which must be changed with the change of circumstances. But there was an understanding that if that law worked well with regard to the objects it was proposed for, and according to the calculations the made, it was not to be changed by its authors. He would not go into details of the working of the system. He adhered to the opinion expressed last June by the right hon. Baronet, and which was quoted the other night, whun he said—

> "I shall go further and say, that in my opinion it is expedient, by safe, gradual, and cautious measures, to base our laws relating to the trade in corn on the sound principles which regulate our commercial policy in respect of every other branch of industry."

In that he entirely concurred; and if the right hon. Baronet had adopted these safe, gradual, and cautious measures, the right hon. Baronet should have had his cordial support. But he could not understand why the improvement now going on in the cultivation of land to so great an extent, should be checked by the uncertainty that would be the result of it. It was impossible to say what would be the result of it. No one could state what the price of corn would be. In his humble opinion, therefore, there was great danger in this sudden change, for it was to affect an interest without their knowing how it would affect it—to shake confidence without substituting anything more suitable, and to put everything in motion without their knowing where or when the motion was to cease. And what were the advantages? He believed it would be found that our supply had kept pace with our increasing population, and that the price of wheat had fallen as our population had increased. In fact, it was inevitably the case that where there was a fertile soil and room for expansion, food was produced in greater proportion than the population. The Western States of America proved this. The Secretary at War had quoted the large increase of population in Ohio, as a proof that that increase precluded the power of supply of food for other parts; but he had not added, that, notwithstanding this increase of population, the exports from Ohio of agricultural produce were greater last year than in any previous year. But he should go a little further, and let him look to Illinois and Indiana. He always regarded with doubt statistical data as to the production of the soil, knowing the difficulty of obtaining exact information

upon the subject; but he held in his hand a statement of the relative increase of population and agricultural production in Illinois and Indiana in the years 1844 and 1845. In Illinois the population was estimated in 1844 at about 600,000, and in 1845, at 700,000; whilst the produce of wheat was in 1844, 3,380,000 bushels; and in 1845, 6,500,000 bushels. In Indiana the population was in 1844, 750,000, and in 1845, 850,000; whilst the production of wheat was estimated in 1844 at 5,419,000 bushels, and in 1845 at 8,000,000 bushels; and the estimate, in both States, of other articles of agricultural produce, such as oats and Indian corn, also proved a great increase. Thus it would be seen that the increase of produce was greater than the increase of population. While, therefore, he thought that in abundant harvests we should have wheat cheaper here, he thought that if we depended for our supply on foreign countries we should be liable to those fluctuations which would produce a great rise in prices. It seemed to him that equality of prices of corn was best maintained when, relying mainly on our own internal production, the supply was spread over the great surface of our territory, came through a variety of channels to a number of markets, and was beyond the control of speculation and combination, or the monopoly of capital. And it might be shown that in articles in which the trade was free, the fluctuations in price had been as great or greater than in wheat. Take, for instance, an article which, next to food, was of the greatest importance in this country, though it came from all quarters of the globe, though the cultivation of it spread over such an immense extent of territory, and enjoyed freedom of trade—he meant cotton—it was not exempt from these fluctuations of prices. He would take three years, 1836, 1837, 1838, to show the great and rapid fluctuations in labour on which the duty had been almost nominal, and with the trade in which neither monopoly nor protection interfered. He found that at the commencement of 1836, the price of fair upland cotton in Liverpool was $9\frac{1}{2}d.$, at the end of March it had risen to $11\frac{3}{8}d.$, after various fluctuations it fell in December of that year to $10\frac{1}{4}d.$ In the course of 1837, it fell from $10\frac{1}{4}d.$ to $5\frac{7}{8}d.$, and again at the close of the year had risen to $8d.$, and in the course of 1838 it fell to $6\frac{1}{2}d.$, and recovered to about $7\frac{1}{2}d.$, thus exhibiting a series of violent fluctuations, and in one single year a variation in the value of the article of nearly 50 per cent. It was sometimes said the rate of freight would serve as a sufficient protection to the home grower. Now, what was the case in this respect? He believed there would be no permanent rise in freight on account of the alteration. The usual rate of freight was, from Odessa, 9*s.*; Hamburgh, 2*s.*; the Baltic, 4*s.*; New York, 6*s.*; and varying in the territories of the United States, between New York and New Orleans, from 6*s.* to 10*s.* and 11*s.*, and the additional charge to London, over Liverpool, from the United States was about 2*s.* But that which came from the home producers had also to pay freight. The freight from Norfolk was 1*s.* 6*d.*; from Lynn, 1*s.* 9*d.*; from Boston, 2*s.*, &c.; so the British grower at Boston had to pay the same freight as the shipper at Hamburgh. He had to apologize to the House for occupying so much time; but they were aware, without going into further details, that the question stood in a different position now than last year. There were now three opinions upon the subject: first, the opinion of those who approved of the continuance of the present protection—the agriculturists; secondly, the opinions of those who wished for entire free trade in corn, and a total abolition of all duties; and, thirdly, a very strong feeling—shared in by a considerable number of persons connected with the commercial and trading circles—favourable to the principle of a small fixed duty. It was not for him to offer an opinion upon the various claims to consideration which these opinions required; but he would say, that if ever there was a time when a compromise was desirable, it was at the present time. If ever there could be a satisfactory settlement made by compromise, it was now. His interest and his wish was to see tranquillity pervade the Empire by a final settlement of a question involving such important interests. He believed public character would receive a great shock by many of the votes about to be recorded in that House; and he believed that confidence in the wisdom, sagacity, and political consistency of its leaders would also be materially shaken. That confidence, without which no Ministry could long exist nor party prevail, and without which the House would lose public esteem and respect, would, he believed, suffer; but though so great a national blessing as the final and satisfactory adjustment of the Corn Law question was to be purchased at such a cost, it

would be a consolation to him if a settlement was really obtained. But then no settlement could be satisfactory that was not founded upon conciliation and concession. It must not be the triumph of one party, and the defeat of another. It must not be the carrying out of the extreme views of either. It must be an amicable arrangement, or, if not, it must, on the contrary, be a victory so complete as to deprive of all power the opposite contending party. Then, he would ask, was it a wise, a politic, a statesman-like thing, that a great interest like the landed interest should be left in that House without confidence in any Government; that they should feel their interests injured, and their existence jeopardized; that they were betrayed by one party, and trampled upon by another? Was this the statesman-like settlement for which the right hon. Gentleman and the noble Lord had been throwing the Government from one to the other? Was it wise that the landed interest should be allowed to brood over its discontent, and seek relief, not perhaps by a renewal of protection, but with the aid of others, by some change in our system of taxation or of currency, which would be inconsistent with the integrity of our Empire, with national credit or with public faith. He believed that if an arbiter could come into that House, unaffected by party feeling, and neither attached to the protectionists nor to the League, he would say the question ought to be settled by mutual concession. This was what he desired to see; but if it could not be so, he should feel it his duty to vote for the Amendment—not to mark his dissatisfaction with the general policy of the Government, nor to put himself in general opposition to them, but because, as one who was in favour of all safe and gradual concessions to free trade, he thought it necessary and politic to maintain adequate protection for our native agriculture.

Viscount MORPETH: If the question had been a less important one, and the moment less critical, I might perhaps have hesitated, at so short a period after I had resumed my seat within this House, to present myself again to its notice, especially when I rise for the purpose of taking that view of the question, which, in my humble judgment, at least, has received almost all the illustration of which it is capable, from every thing that the most consummate ability, the most industrious research, and the most protracted discussion could bring to bear upon it, not to mention the still more useful assistance it has lately received from official countenance, and from many illustrious adhesions. The hon. Member who has just sat down was, we know, the friend of free trade in the abstract; but after his speech of to-night, it would be difficult to discover that he is a friend to it either in abstract or detail. He professes himself, indeed, to be favourably disposed to some gradual and cautious relaxation of restrictive duties, but he has not told us how far he would go, or where he would stop; and I imagine that, with reference to the great interest which has been specially brought forward in the course of this debate, the large agricultural interest of this country, if there be any one course more than another to which they profess to object, it is to make it the subject of constant, gradual experiments, being for ever tampered with, and never let alone. The hon. Member has told us that the great want in the preceding autumn—upon the circumstances connected with which much of the Ministerial proposition is sustained and has been founded—was the want of a Ministry. Now, I certainly think that want is most sensibly felt by that great and important party in the State and in the country of which the hon. Gentleman himself is an ornament. We hear of their being backed by the voice of the country; we hear of their contesting successfully every vacant seat; but still it seems to be as lamentable as it is unaccountable, that they are without leaders and without a head. If this be not the case—when they have displayed the full force of their numbers, when they have made the echo of their own opinions heard throughout the country—I suppose we may expect to see a successful and stable Government formed upon the principle of undiminished protection to agriculture? Indeed the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Baring) has told us that the present time would be eminently suitable for a compromise. I don't know whether he came here entrusted with any message—I don't know whether he came here the bearer of any overture to propose a Ministry founded on the principle of compromise. If his compromise, indeed, were founded upon the commercial circular he read himself, I think he would find that he would depart very little from the actual line of conduct of the right hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel). But I apprehend that it is now universally felt, both in the country and in this House, that the time for compromise is gone by. A compromise,

indeed, was once offered by the party, and by the leaders of the party with whom I have the pride and satisfaction of acting. And the hon. Member cannot forget that the party which is now so glad to hail him and to cheer him as an honourable auxiliary, summarily and immediately rejected all notions of the kind. I feel, Sir, that the best atonement I can have for offering myself to the attention of the House, on this long-discussed and wide-stretching question — which, as I before said, has already received almost all the illustration of which it is capable—will be, first, to compress what I have to offer into a very moderate compass; and next, to confine my remarks to what may seem more special and peculiar in my own opportunities and position with respect to this subject. Since I had the honour of occupying a seat in this House, I have been a traveller on the North American Continent; I have, for an uninterrupted period of two years, lived in the heart of a purely agricultural district; and I have lost and regained my seat as the Representative of the West Riding of Yorkshire. That last circumstance is naturally the freshest and the uppermost in my own mind, as well as far the weightiest in itself: but I feel that it speaks sufficiently and intelligibly enough for itself; that, brought about as it has been, circumstanced as it has been, timed as it has been, it tells its own moral, and conveys its own meaning. If my predecessor in the seat I have now recovered, in the opening debate of the present Parliament, justly adduced his own return as a most significant reply to the inquiry submitted to the country with respect to the Budget of 1841, I feel that I may still more triumphantly appeal to my own recovery of that seat as the most significant and signal verdict that could be given upon the measure which now, under happier auspices, has been submitted to the country in the year 1846. There is only one further circumstance which seems to me to require a remark with reference to the bearing of the late election in Yorkshire upon the question now before the House. As we all know, the project of the right hon. Baronet concerns an infinite variety of articles besides corn and provisions. The scheme has justly earned the title of "comprehensive;" and it meddles almost as much with manufactures as it does with agriculture. ["No, no."] It certainly meddles quite as much with many leading branches of manufacture as with agriculture—at least as much as it can. The abolition of protection with regard to manufactures is, like that upon corn, entire, but, unlike that on corn, it is immediate. I was about to say, that the constituency by whose choice and approval I have been honoured, represents, as is well known, a great variety both of manufacturing and agricultural pursuits. It comprises the largest woollen, the largest worsted, and the largest steel manufacture in the Empire; and it embraces, I believe, the largest linen manufacture in England. It comprises, besides, very extensive iron and cotton manufactures. Now, as I have just said, the withdrawal of protection from the articles manufactured by these individuals is immediate and complete; and with respect to some of them it is by no means clear that the withdrawal of protection will be merely nominal. I may mention, for instance, that the cutlery of Sheffield—the knives, the scissors, and the razors, for the manufacture of which that town has acquired such just celebrity—has been frequently imitated on the continent of Europe; that the Sheffield mark has been forged upon the articles, and that, having been introduced into this country, they have been able to undersell the genuine Sheffield manufacture. So also with respect to the article of woollen manufacture called "low cloths." I am told that this manufacture, which prevails very extensively in the West Riding of Yorkshire, will probably encounter formidable competition from the low cloths of Belgium. But, however, that may be, not one of those interests, all of them directly affected, some of them liable to real risk from the withdrawal of protection—not one of those interests, during the interval of a fortnight which was specially exacted for the consideration of the measure by the friends of protection, nor even under the excitement of some rather vehement appeals which were made in the principal cities of the district, nor when the representatives of these manufacturing interests were assembled in great numbers before the hustings at Wakefield—not one of them uttered a single murmur, or a whisper of disapproval, or a wish for the continuance of protection. "Competition may come," they said, "but we are prepared to meet it;" and, as I was expressly told, "all we wish for is a fair field, and no favour." Let me ask, then, why that interest which so often plumes itself on being the most important, the most noble, the most English in the country, does not take a leaf out of the book of these begrudged manufacturers, and con-

sent to be no longer the only department of our national industry which does not scorn unfair odds, and strive to keep its own? I may now refer to my residence in the agricultural districts, and the impression it made upon my mind. I have not to learn, for the first time, that the landowners protest for themselves—and in most cases I am willing to believe persuade themselves—that they do not take the course they have taken on this question with any exclusive regard to their own interests. They may feel it a comfortable reserve that those interests would not be injured; but there they consider themselves on a par with the manufacturers and Leaguers, to whom—and not unfairly—they impute some regard to their own interest as inducing them to engage in the warfare they are now waging against the Corn Laws. The landowner, however, persuades himself that he is not induced to take so strenuous a part in favour of maintaining the Corn Laws for his own interest exclusively, but for the interest of his tenants, his dependants, of the agricultural labourers especially. It is through their breast that he is aimed at, and it is through their wounds that he himself shall bleed. Now, valuable as I admit the services of the labourers in agriculture to be, and immense as I think the obligation is both upon the part of individuals and of the State to cherish them, yet in a community to which trade and manufactures are contributing so amply and so constantly, that it is entirely false to say of any one of the great interests into which it is divided that in it exclusively, or even principally, resides the spring of our national wealth, or the muscle of our national strength—I think it neither more nor less than an act of positive injustice to all of them, to select any one as a special object to be fostered and favoured, or, as they are not ashamed to term it, "protected." But in the next place—and I rely on this ground with the greater hope and the greater confidence, because I know the great influence and the wide ramifications of the agricultural interest, and because I respect, though I cannot recommend even an excess of sympathy for the agricultural labourer, for his disposition to look up to his superiors, to wear their colours, as we were told by the hon. Member for Northamptonshire—for his proneness to be led, and for his actual wants and privations, yet I question whether the "protection" which you wish to preserve for him is not miscalled and misplaced, and whether among the many victims of a mistaken system there are any more deeply or permanently injured than the tenant-farmer and the agricultural labourer. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire presented us with a picturesque and pathetic picture of an interview between a landlord and his farmer, whom he represented as suddenly turned out of his holding because he could not afford to give an equal rent with some entrprising and intelligent member of the Anti-Corn-Law League. [Mr. S. O'Brien: Oh, no!] I think the hon. Member represented a person with more capital, more energy, more intelligence than a tenant-farmer. [Mr. S. O'Brien: Not necessarily a Leaguer.] I should be very sorry to misrepresent the hon. Member; but I am sure either he or some one else—[Mr. S. O'Brien: That may be]—referred to the hon. Member for Stockport in relation to some special operations in agriculture; and I may have combined that allusion with the graphic sketch of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, which he cannot wonder made a deep impression on my mind. But the concurrence which the hon. Member described is nothing which might not happen any day in the week in any past year of protection with a landlord who did not give a lease, and who did not feel any scruple or compunction at dealing summarily with his tenant; at all events the only novelty which the hon. Member represented as likely to ensue from the abolition of protection was, that the acre would bear six quarters of wheat where it had hitherto borne three. But I will put out of consideration for a moment, in looking at the effect which the abolition of protection would have upon the agricultural labourer, that truth which is now universally and not less justly recognized, that the interests of all classes must really be identical; for this, after all, may only come to a sort of begging the question, when every one may say, "This is for my interest, therefore it is for yours, so let it be done." Still it will hardly be disputed that the real interests of agriculture must depend upon the general well-being of the community, and upon the effective demand of the working classes. Now, has not that effective demand always existed in a far greater degree in years when corn was cheap than when corn was dear? The hon. Member for Huntingdon says, cheapness of bread will do no good unless you have a good demand for labour; that if you have a small demand for labour you will be worse off, whatever may be the cheapness of bread. But has it not been

universally found to be the fact, as far as any of our living memories can bear us out, that with cheapness of bread there has come increasing demand for labour? ("No, no.") Hon. Gentlemen on the opposite side, in talking of the "three years' experience" of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, are apt to say, that the prosperity and the activity of those years are not to be imputed to the working of his Tariff, but to various other causes, and especially to the activity displayed upon railways. But when was the activity displayed, and so advantageously displayed, upon railways called forth? Was it in cheap years, or was it in dear years? The hon. Member for Rutland, in his speech to-night, said, that the year 1839 was a year of great prosperity to the manufacturers; and he quoted, I believe, a speech made in this House by the late lamented Member for Kendal, bearing witness to the then existing prosperity of many branches of manufactures; but it must be remembered that the year 1839 was the beginning of that cycle of dear years which was accompanied with such disastrous effects almost to every branch of employment and industry. What do I find in a statistical report drawn up upon the state of the woollen districts of Yorkshire in that very year, 1839, which we are now told was one of prosperity to the manufacturers of this country? It is said—

"On a careful comparison of the wages in the district in the respective periods of 1833 to 1835, and 1839 to 1841, from the testimony of mill-owners and the information of weavers and spinners, the amount of employment was at least two-fifths less than in the average of the preceding cheap period; and combining the two elements of a depreciated rate of wages and diminished amount of employment, it would appear that, estimating the fall of wages at 20 per cent., and the diminution of employment at 33, the real deduction in the wages of the operatives is about nine-twentieths, or nearly one-half—a fact which, coupled with the enormous rise in the price of flour and butchers' meat, painfully indicates the privations which the operative class is now enduring."

Why, it is as plain as testimony and experience can make it, that when corn is dear, the effective demand of the working classes—even of the agricultural classes themselves—must be proportionably diminished. I want you to put this in the most selfish, most exclusive light you can, and imagine the farmer or the miller saying, "Never mind, let them buy fewer coats, fewer stockings, fewer shoes; let them get fewer bales of wool from Australia or Saxony, fewer bags of cotton from Alabama, even fewer hides from my brother grazier; but to me, the farmer and the miller, they must come for their daily bread; they must bring grist to my mill;" why, then, I say, that not only does it appear, that in dear years the active demand of the working classes generally must be diminished; not only will they be able to buy less, which will tell upon the landowner and the farmer and the miller, but also to eat less—which will tell upon themselves; but what is the result of this "protection" to the agricultural labourer himself? How is he benefited by the bolstering up of agriculture? What share has he in the *spolia opima* of legislative protection? The noble Lord who spoke so creditably on the last evening of this debate, advised us to look into our own neighbourhoods if we would judge of the effect of protection. The noble Member for Liverpool told us that wages varied with the price of provisions; but it was proved by the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, that they never varied in anything like the same proportion, and never rose or fell in proportion to the price of provisions? In my own neighbourhood and district, in the memory of the living race, wages have never varied at all; they have always, as in Northamptonshire, I am happy to say, been as high as 12*s.* a week, and more in harvest. Then, if the agricultural labourer receives fixed wages of 12*s.* a week, without their ever varying according to the price of corn, does it not follow that when, instead of paying 1*s.* 8*d.* for his stone of flour, he has to pay, as he does now, 2*s.* 6*d.*, then his weekly earnings, his yearly income, his command over the comforts and necessaries of life, must be very materially abridged? At the rate of 12*s.* a week, he earns 31*l.* a year; and a difference of 10*d.* in the stone of flour, taking his family at six in number, and their average consumption at half a stone per head, makes a difference to him of 2*s.* 6*d.* a week, a difference of 6*l.* 10*s.* a year—a whole fifth of his income. Now, I put it to the House, whether we, the rich men, the Gentlemen of two meals, whom the hon. Member for Northamptonshire instanced, should not think a whole fifth of our income a very grievous addition to the Income Tax? It must be more so in proportion to the man who, by the sweat of his brow, only earns 31*l.* a year. I have had access to a table—though I fear the time has almost come in the discussion of this question, when we should have done with the pro-

duction of tables and papers—but I have had access to a paper, drawn up, not with a view to the discussion of the Corn Laws, but for statistical inquiry in the small town near which I reside; and this table shows the proportionate expenditure in the article of food in three families—in a tradesman's family, in a professional man's family, and in a working man's family. I find that six persons being allowed for in each, and when flour of the second quality was 2*s.* 6*d.* a stone, the yearly bill of the tradesman's family for flour was 12*l.* 13*s.*, being 15 per cent. of his whole expenditure for food on the year. The annual bill of the professional man's family for flour was 18*l.* 8*s.*, being 10 per cent of his whole expenditure for food; while the expenditure of the working man's family, conducted with the greatest regard to economy, was 13*l.* 4*s.*, being a per centage, not of 15 per cent., as in the tradesman's family—not of 10 per cent., as in the case of the professional man, but of 48 per cent. of his total charge for food. Now, is it not apparent how much more heavily and sorely such a deduction from the amount he has to lay out on his food must press on the labouring man than on the classes immediately above him, and if on the classes immediately above him, of course in a far greater degree than on the wealthier classes of society. But, again, I find that the professional man, living in an economical manner, spends upon all the articles of food he consumes, taking his whole bill for food in the year, about one-third of his total income; the food of the tradesman takes about one-half of his total income; while, in the case of the working man, it takes three-fourths of his total income. What he actually spends in food is 73 per cent., and there only remains to him 27 per cent. of his earnings for the rent of his house, for schooling for his children, and for procuring shoes and those necessary articles of clothing which he and his family require. And, therefore, I put it to the House, does not the increase of 2*s.* 6*d.* upon his weekly bill for flour strip him, in a most extensive sense, of the command of other necessaries and luxuries of life, of the means of bettering his own and his family's condition, and of giving education to his children? I have sometimes thought that the whole logic of this question is so compendious in its form, and so self-evident in its bearings, that it has only to be stated, and that a simple syllogism might do the work of a speech, viz., there is not more than a sufficient quantity of food grown in this country for our present supply — I think he will be a hardy man who denies that — there is an addition, it is computed, of 1,000 children a day, or 365,000 a year, to our present population; then I also make bold to assert that there is not, year by year, an addition of 365,000 quarters of wheat to our native-grown produce; then does it not result that it is most important to procure an additional supply from abroad, and, as many purchasers are very poor, that this ought to be obtained at the cheapest rate possible? I should like to know where is the fallacy in this syllogism—for while I will not impute to the agricultural body that they have a less conscientious sense of duty, or are less accessible to humanity than those that I think take the side of humanity and duty in this matter, yet I maintain that if they cannot detect a flaw in this broad chain of facts—the large supply of mouths in this country, the corresponding deficiency of native-grown wheat, and the importance of getting all we can at the cheapest rate from abroad—I say, if they cannot upset this brief deduction, then in spite of their natural impulses and in spite of their early prepossessions, they cannot persevere in this system of restriction without infatuation, and I almost say without cruelty. I do not agree with those who impute it as blame to Her Majesty's Government that the operation of the sliding-scale powerfully affected the Ministerial nerves, or that they were appalled by the events of last autumn. An hon. Gentleman has said, "How preposterous it is to grant a full remission of the Corn Laws, under the necessity of giving an additional supply of food to Ireland;" and he asks, "Has the House ever shown any reluctance to grant relief to Ireland? Whatever its Saxon disposition may be, has it ever shown reluctance to grant the people of Ireland relief?" No, it has not; but I ask is it fair to put an additional tax upon the generosity of England because she shows a readiness to fly to the relief of Ireland? This I hold to be a flagrant contravention of the maxim "Be just before you are generous." Be generous, I say, to the people of Ireland; but be just to the collective community of England. The hon. Member for Huntingdon says "You are not to apply a permanent remedy to a temporary evil;" but I say the the mischief and the evil that have arisen, may arise every year; and are we

always to be mocked with this delusion of sliding-scales that do not slide, and of restrictive laws that, according to the recurring caprice of the seasons, must be constantly modified or repealed. It is no reproach to the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) that he has been influenced in the course he has adopted by the state of the seasons. If he did find that his anticipations were deceived, and his calculations baffled by circumstances over which he had control, he might have been ashamed for changing his mind; but can any one be reproached with being baffled with that which he could neither counteract nor control? I can see no disparagement of free trade—it is rather a confirmation of the truth and justice of the principles on which it rests—that it does follow the laws of nature, and bends to the rules that guide the seasons in their course. You might justly apply, without exaggeration, to free trade those striking lines that the poet applied to the Roman Emperor who was befriended in the battle-field by the tempest. I shall endeavour to quote my Latin better than the hon. Member for Newcastle—and it is an argument in favour of free trade that it should be enforced by the blight, the scarcity, and the pestilence!

"Tibi mittit ab antris
"Æolus armatas hyemes; tibi militat æther,
"Et conjurati veniunt ad classica venti."

It is no disparagement to free trade, but rather a confirmation of all that is just in it, that the stars in their courses do not act against it, but in its favour. With respect to this argument of the weather, I believe it has been found by all those who have given their special attention to its variations, that the same circumstances of cold or hot, wet or dry seasons, will be found to prevail very generally over a large portion of the world—for instance, over most of Europe at the same time, and to affect the produce of such portions accordingly; but, on the other hand, seasons of such a marked nature will generally be compensed by seasons of an opposite character in the remaining parts of the globe, probably on the North American continent. Hon. Members will remember that the summer of 1842 was distinguished by a warm and even temperature. I was on the continent of North America at that time, when we enjoyed a succession of the most favourable weather; and much as I had heard of the hot summers of America, I rarely felt what could be called a hot day. We also recollect that last summer we had very damp and variable weather, and we might have read in the papers every day of the constant heat and fine weather in America, and we even heard of persons that actually died of the heat; and what is the inference from all this? That the variations of the weather seem almost to obey the same laws of balance as the returns of light and darkness, so that when any season of a markedly unfavourable character occurs here, when we are assailed with unseasonable cold, and when we are drenched with summer rain, we may derive comfort from the reflection that if we do but repeal our Corn Laws, if we do but open our ports, the rays which have been denied to us are ripening their distant harvests; and just at the very moment when we want it, the superfluity of their crops and the stores of their garners will be wafted to us to atone for and to adjust our deficiencies. But with reference to the continent of America, I do not wish to allude so much to any statistical deductions which my residence there may have enabled me to make, because they have been the subject of frequent discussion, and may be calculated as easily and appreciated almost as easily at any distance as on the spot; but I confess I have felt sometimes that the real sight, the actual presence, the faithful eyes, do drive a truth home nearer to one's conviction than can be done by a laborious process of calculation. I have felt this when in the actual view of those wide prairies which show by their unfenced solitudes that they are without an inhabitant, but by their even surface and waving grass, that they invite the plough over every inch of them—of those endless forests which show by the evidence of all that is going on upon their fringes, that as soon as the axe shall ring among them—as soon as the log-cutter shall have his house, and the thin column of smoke shall ascend among the tress, future crops of wheat and maize will speedily spring up and follow each other in due succession—of that Valley of the Mississippi, which the accomplished traveller De Tocqueville has described as the most magnificent abode ever formed by nature for the race of man—of the basin of our own St. Lawrence, which, I believe, contains more fresh water than all the rest of the world besides—I have felt that, while I knew the distance of transit would prevent those extraordinary imports which the panics of the protectionists have sometimes conjured up before their eyes—that as it must still be a long time before this same Valley of the Mississippi will contain the

2,000,000,000 of inhabitants for which it is said to be adapted—as it must be some time before the powers of production in that country are reached by the spread of population, it is a pity that we should not make available these unparalleled facilities for the growth and transport of provisions for the supply of our own isle, which is calculated to produce a glut of almost every article except that not unimportant one of food and provisions. But, as I intimated, it is not so much the statistics as the social and political impressions which I derived from my visit which I wish for one moment to mention to the House before I cease to trespass on their attention. Much that I witnessed there—much that I heard there, and more that has reached me since, has certainly not tended to give me a very favourable impression of the orderly working, of the pacific and moderate tendency, or of the scrupulous adherence to good faith, to be derived from a constitution of pure and unchecked democracy; and I did not return home with any increased repugnance ["Hear."]—I mean to say, any diminished attachment to the aristocratical and monarchical element in our own Constitution. But both then and since, there and here, I have felt the perfect conviction that we could not confront the example of general ease, comfort, and abundance which pervades the whole bulk of the American people. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire talked of a man of two meals. This reminds me of the story which is well known, at least on the other side of the water, of an Irishman who refused to write home that he had meat three times a day, because nobody would believe him; but I say we cannot confront the American example, we cannot confront the growing convictions, aspirings, and reasonings of our own people—we cannot confront the master tendencies of the age, the country, and the world at large in which we live, if we do not consent to administer and work out our aristocratic institutions in rather more of a democratic spirit. [*A laugh.*] Notwithstanding that implied dissent, I contend that no aristocracy resting upon exclusive privileges—which happily ours does not—can now be tolerated for an instant. I contend, further, that no aristocracy which props itself upon special interests will escape their certain downfall; that no aristocracy, not even one so long descended and so highly illustrated as our own, can consist with Corn Laws, which when the pressure of famine comes should prove prohibitory. This will be too hard a strain upon any title-deeds and parchments—no matter what is their date or their antiquity. I do not impute to the aristocratic body, or agricultural body, or to any of their members, that they have any disposition to promote any interest that may affect them individually, or to espouse measures merely for selfish benefit, at the expense of the rest of the community; still they are interests and associations, not of individuals, but of a class which they have been in the habit of keeping prominently in their mind and view; there are sympathies and feelings which belong to what is termed the *esprit de corps;* there is a concealed and even a refined degree of selfishness which almost merges into generosity, and which easily mistakes itself for it, when we think that a body with whom we have long identified ourselves are likely to be outnumbered, and are liable to be assailed—in these circumstances, even monopoly itself, as it nears its downfall, although it is not entitled to the attribute of self-sacrifice, will be invested with the grace of martyrdom; just as in the case of a scene on the stage, we are apt to feel sympathy with a culprit who is detected, and who stands at bay. But it cannot promote the general interests of the country, or a healthy tone in a system, to indulge in practice, at least, any such misplaced and morbid sympathy. It is the part of true patriotism, no less than of sound philosophy, to put the universal in preference to the particular—to raise yourself above a clique, and be for the people. I would therefore conjure those who belong to the real aristocracy of the country, who are connected with it either by hereditary associations or landed possessions, to raise themselves above any of their special interests, and bear their part in the consideration of this great question. I grudge the other side the adherence of the names of the Marquess of Granby and Viscount Clive, for I feel that our aristocracy have hitherto marched with our whole progress, and identified themselves with the successive glories of our national history. Let them not refuse to bear their part in a settlement which, if not adjusted with them, must be adjusted in spite of them. Let them remember that they are but a part—if they will, a distinguished and prominent part. I believe they may make it continue what it has for the most part been, a respected and honoured part, in our system of national polity; but this system comprehends, besides themselves, the multiplied energies of trade and industry—

the sober-thinking and staid determination of the large middle class; the hard-working industry and urgent privations of the immense working class—the powerful agency of an active and enlightened press, and all the busy stir and progress of an inquiring, pushing, advancing age. Let them throw in their lot together; let them consider this and other kindred subjects as a great whole, and make it as much their pride as it is their safety to be the leaders, and not the laggers, in the onward march of the united British people.

Mr. MILNES GASKELL said, he rose, in the performance of a most painful duty, to oppose a Government which he had long cordially followed; and although the office he had lately held was not one that gave him any claim to explain the grounds on which he had quitted it, he felt sure that he should receive the indulgence of the House during the few observations which he had to make. There was no Member of the House of Commons, however humble might be his position, who had not a public duty to discharge, which must be paramount to all other considerations—a public character to maintain—a constituency to represent and serve—and the interests of this great Empire to promote to the best of his judgment and ability. During the fourteen years that he (Mr. Gaskell) had had the honour of a seat in Parliament, he had given a constant support to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. He might now, perhaps, without presumption, call him his right hon. Friend, as his official connexion with him had ceased. [Sir R. Peel: Hear, hear.] During those fourteen years, he had been proud to follow the right hon. Baronet. He had been proud to follow him in Opposition—he had been proud of his connexion with his Government—and he would gladly have made many and painful sacrifices to have been enabled to support him now; but he had felt, when this proposition had been first brought forward, that without some overwhelming proof of its necessity, it would be impossible for him (Mr. Gaskell) to run counter to implied engagements and recorded votes. And, notwithstanding the speech of his right hon. Friend the Secretary at War, and the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State, he must say, that he had still to learn what new circumstances had arisen, what sufficient reasons had been alleged, to justify that House, which had been elected to maintain agricultural protection, in consenting, not to a suspension of the Corn Law, but to a total departure from the principles by which it had hitherto been guided. He was not about to enter into the general question. There were many other Gentlemen who were far more conversant with the subject than he could be; and he was at that moment in a state of indisposition which would be an effectual security to the House that he should not long detain it. He was only desirous to explain, as shortly and clearly as he could, the grounds on which he had himself acted. He could not forget, that during the last four Parliaments he had uniformly opposed every proposition which had been made by the noble Lord the Member for London, by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, and by others, for the repeal of the Corn Laws. He had done this under the guidance of those public men in whom his confidence had been placed. He had never been one of those who had entertained extreme opinions upon this subject. He had been favourable to a moderate protection: he had always been of opinion that the Legislature of this country was bound to afford a moderate protection to the agricultural interest, and that the agricultural interest had a right to claim it. He retained this opinion still: he had been confirmed in it by the authority, at one time or another of their career (for it was very difficult to follow changes of opinion upon the Corn Laws), of almost every public man of eminence in our time—by that of Mr. Canning, of Mr. Huskisson, and of the late Lord Grey—by that of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) and the noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell), till within a very recent period—by that of Lord Stanley and Lord Ashburton now; and he (Mr. Gaskell) must be forgiven if he said, that the arguments which he had heard advanced in former years by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had left too deep an impression upon his mind to be outweighed by those which he had now adduced. He, for one, was not able, like the Secretary of State, to dispose of arguments and of speeches which had so long carried conviction to his mind, in one single sentence. But he (Mr. Gaskell) had other objections to the measure besides objections to the abrogation of protection. He was strongly of opinion that the Gentlemen upon those (the Ministerial) benches ought not to be its proposers, and that the present House of Commons ought not to sanction it. He knew, indeed, that the right hon. Baronet at the head of

the Government had been actuated by the best and highest motives in the course which he had pursued. It was impossible that he could be actuated by any other. Why, look at the sacrifice that he had made! The right hon. Baronet had made two great sacrifices: one in 1829, and the other now. But this sacrifice was much greater than the first. In 1829, he had lost the representation of the University of Oxford, and the confidence of a portion of his party, which had been afterwards so cordially restored to him. But now, he had broken up this noble party; he had sacrificed this party to his convictions—the great party which he had drawn around him, and which had been once his pride. But it was not so much the course taken by the right hon. Gentleman, as the coincidence of so sudden and total a change of opinion on the part of so many other Members of that House, which had produced the feelings of distrust and of irritation which pervaded the public mind. Could any man doubt that the majority of the present House of Commons had been returned to maintain the principle of protection? He was not speaking of individual exceptions like his hon. Friend whom he saw opposite, the Member for Wakefield (Mr. W. Lascelles), but he spoke of the great majority of those around him; and he owned it appeared to him to be impossible for those Gentlemen, without the strongest, the most cogent, and the most conclusive reasons, to concur in the proposition of Her Majesty's Government. He was convinced that, even supposing this measure to be in itself desirable, the injury which would accrue to public interests from its being passed under such circumstances, would more than countervail any advantage that could be derived from it. It was true, they might have given no formal pledges to their constituents; but why had they not done so? Why was it that the gentlemen of England had been always preferred to delegates? Because as yet they had been always trusted. For himself, he could most truly say that, highly as he valued the privilege of being a Representative of the people, deeply as he prized the confidence of his constituents—and he rejoiced to think that by no act of his was he ever likely to forfeit it—he would far rather resign his seat in Parliament to-morrow, than be fettered by any distinct or positive pledges as to the course that he should pursue. Yes, but there were implied engagements which ought not to be lightly broken; and they were bound to represent the sentiments of their constituents, not on mere isolated questions of policy that might arise, but on the great principles upon which they were founded. Such, at least, was his reading of the Constitution; and he thought a laxer view of representative responsibility was ill calculated to inspire confidence in their proceedings. His right hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire (Mr. S. Herbert) had told them, the other night, that they were not to stand in that House as the ambassadors or the delegates of local parties. Let his right hon. Friend take care that, by the course which he was now pursuing, and by the manner in which he was pursuing it, he and those who thought with him, were not doing more to establish and to extend the principle of delegation than had ever before been done by public men in the history of this country. There was another doctrine, too, by which it had been sought to justify this course in another place, and which, considering the quarter from which it came—a quarter commanding respect and deference on the part of nine-tenths of the people of England—appeared to him (Mr. Gaskell) to be fraught with still greater danger: he meant the doctrine, that if the head of a Government proposed measures from which his Colleagues in the service of the Crown dissented, those measures must be acquiesced in, lest the Government should be broken up. He had never heard any doctrine broached either in that House or elsewhere, which had filled him with greater apprehension and alarm. He had listened with the deepest pain to the speech of his noble Friend the Member for Liverpool, and to that of another hon. Gentleman, the Member for Inverness. He owned it appeared to him that such a doctrine was utterly fatal to the independence of public men, utterly inconsistent with the functions of a deliberative assembly; that it tended to merge the citizen of a free State in a mere passive and unresisting agent, and that it was at total variance with the spirit of English institutions. One other point he wished to press on the attention of the House. If the Representatives of agricultural districts, if Gentlemen who had been returned to Parliament to vote against the 8*s.* duty of the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), showed so little sympathy with their constituents; if they showed a disposition to surrender at the first summons that was made to them—a disposition to barter the social blessings of which they had formerly heard so much,

for considerations of political convenience —he (Mr. Gaskell) ventured to predict that the agricultural body would soon be called upon to struggle against other changes—changes more fatal to the Constitution, though less injurious to themselves. And was it not in human nature that those men should respond to such a call with far less alacrity, with far less interest in the maintenance of their country's institutions, than they had hitherto evinced? It was no light thing to shake the confidence of the people in their Representatives—it was no light thing to reverse great systems of policy without notice and without appeal—it was no light thing to proclaim to the people of England that their Representatives thought enlisting under one banner at the hustings, and then fighting under another in the House of Commons, was no act of injustice to the constituent body, and no act of discredit to themselves. He (Mr. Gaskell) had given this subject a long, an anxious, and a most painful consideration. He had taken into account the calls of his own personal conviction on the one hand, and the too obvious consequences of party disunion on the other. He had not been unmindful of party obligations—of the deference which men were naturally disposed to pay towards those whom they had long followed; but though it was with deep and undissembled pain that he felt compelled to differ from the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), it was without the least hesitation, and with a clear and undoubting conscience, that he should support the Amendment of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. ROEBUCK said, that considering the various emotions to which this question had given rise, he naturally approached it with some degree of anxiety; although feeling in his heart that when the present passions and animosities should have passed away, posterity would wonder at the extraordinary sensation which the present proposition of the Government had produced. He approached the consideration of this question without having any personal feeling—he had no opinion to explain away—he had no peculiar reasons to assign, for in his present convictions he had nothing to defend, but he found every thing to assail. A remark made by the hon. Gentleman who had just down, certainly appeared to him to call for some observations by those who entertained some feelings for the independence of Parliament. It might be a very proper thing for Gentlemen who had given pledges to their constituents—no matter how few these might be—in obedience to those commands, which were sometimes intimated through those constituents, to give up their seats; but it was for Parliament to consider whether or not those things which they had seen of late showed much improvement on former practices, either as regarded the morality of public men, or as regarded the credit of that House in public estimation. He recollected hon. Gentlemen saying they gave no pledge —that they were not delegates. He should like to know what was the meaning of not being a delegate, but a representative, but that during the term of service in Parliament one must be guided by his own personal convictions? He, in his own person, represented a large constituency. The phrase might be unfortunate, but he did represent a large constituency, which, on many occasions and within the last few years, had had opportunities and reasons for disputing many of the votes he had given. But had he yielded to the pressure —had he yielded his seat—then the cry on the other side would have been, "You are no longer a representative, but a delegate." He had seen some strange departures from that House of late, and still more strange fillings up. In plain simple language, he had seen that Gentlemen had resigned, not at the command of what was properly called a constituency, but in conformity with what used to be the practice under the close borough system. ["Name."] He hoped hon. Gentlemen would not compel him to name names; for it did so happen, that he could name not only the constituencies, but the constituents. On this occasion he thought he should best consult good taste by not doing so. They who spoke of the independence of Parliament, should not provoke the scrutiny of those who could put their finger upon what he ventured to call the sore places of the Constitution. One remark he should make, but not in any spirit of animosity, either to the right hon. Gentleman opposite (Sir R. Peel), or to the noble Lord on that side (Lord J. Russell). But he thought it matter of great importance for those who should hereafter wield the destinies of this country to remember that their opinions were to be formed from close and painful considerations of that philosophy (the word had been used) upon which the science of legislation rested, and which was too often sneered at by those who called themselves practical statesmen. The right hon. Gentleman opposite (Sir R.

Peel), with all his great capacity and long experience, had waited till the year 1845 before he announced his change of opinion on the subject before the House. It was equally wonderful that the noble Lord on that side of the House (Lord J. Russell) should have waited for precisely the same year to announce, under the same circumstances, his change of opinion. He (Mr. Roebuck) could not suppose that the noble Lord had been actuated by any but the purest motives. He gave the right hon. Gentleman credit for the same. But while he thus freed their honour from imputations, he must be pardoned for saying that their proceedings were a satire on their understandings. They had changed upon a ground which ought, at any time, to have afforded one of the most important elements for the determination of the question. The change of seasons, the vicissitudes of temperature, the event of a bad harvest, were considerations pressed upon practical statesmen by those philosophers who had preceded the practical statesman in taking a just view of the matter, by about half a century. The reason assigned by the proposer of the measure for changing the law was a good one; but it was a reason which, when he first made up his mind on the subject, ought to have entered into his calculation. It was the political sagacity of the Gentlemen opposite he was disparaging, not their personal honour. But because those right hon. Gentlemen had changed their opinions, was that House to be frightened from its propriety by threats of a great party being broken up? The question was not whether a great party was about to be broken up, but what did the exigencies of the country require? And in that spirit he approached this subject, careless alike of the party opposite, or that on his own side. Was anything about to happen which was likely to do injury to the people of England, to the labourer or the capitalist? If so, put an end to it. Do not come here, night after night, uselessly venting abuse on the right hon. Gentleman opposite—abuse, which though wrapped in phrases expressive of passionate emotion, could be considered as no other than the ebullition of party disappointment. To come then to the question: he was glad that the Amendment put it at once on the right ground. It was not simply, "shall we or shall we not alter the Corn Laws?" It was a declaration, that those who supported the Amendment were against entering at all into the question of the fitness of continuing protection. That was the Parliamentary meaning of the Amendment. He readily met the hon. Member on that ground, and would take up the question—"Are we to have, or are we not to have protection—in what way are we to have it—and whom are we to protect?" The party opposite claimed protection to agriculture. Now, what was protection? He was extremely anxious this question should be reduced to the narrowest compass; for, by indulging in plausible generalities, the question was apt to escape them. He would take the illustration of the hon. Member for Rutland, who said—

> "If you withdraw protection from agriculture, the necessary consequence will be that all the corn in the world will come into England, and the difference in the price of corn under a non-protective and under a protective system will be the difference between 19*s.* and 57*s.*"

Now, let it be understood: was it meant to be said that, by the passing of a law to prevent the importation of corn, the price was raised from 19*s.* to 57*s.*, and that the community at large were compelled to pay that increased price? If so, the difference between 19*s.* and 57*s.* on every quarter of corn consumed in the country, was the price paid for protection, and was, in fact, an addition by so much to the expense of providing food for the people. That, then, was the meaning of protection to agriculture—that the food of the people should be produced at a higher price; and the more they exaggerated the danger to the agricultural population from non-protection, the larger they made the sum paid for the protection granted to that peculiar class. Now, he said not that that sum, though admittedly a large one, was a reason why protection should not be granted. But he was anxious to know, not only why they should protect, but whom they should protect? The agricultural class, it was said. But he wanted to know who were the agricultural class. It might be said, the labourer, the tenant-farmer, and the landlord. All these had different interests; and though they were united in one name—the agricultural interest—their interests depended upon totally different circumstances. All of a sudden, the Gentlemen opposite, and particularly the noble Member for Northamptonshire, had become the friends of the labouring class. They professed extreme anxiety that wages should not fall. They were not speaking of the landlords. Oh, they did not care at all about the rent! They were not speaking

as tenant-farmers; but they were most peculiarly and sensitively alive to the interest of the labourers, and dreaded nothing so much in the world as that wages should fall. And the wages of labour they contended would be seriously affected by enabling the poor man to obtain his quarter of corn for 19*s.* instead of 59*s.* But the wages of labour were not dependent on the quantity of produce in the country; it depended on entirely different circumstances—namely, the demand for the labour, or the amount of the capital invested in its employment, and the number of labourers that could be brought into the market. The amount of food in the country could not be increased without increasing the purchasing power of the labourer, and enabling him to obtain, by his wages, a larger quantity of the means of life. To prove that the introduction of cheap corn would ruin the agricultural interest, meaning thereby the labourers in agriculture, they must show that it would do one of two things—either that it would increase the number of labourers, or that it would diminish the fund which gave employment for their labour. But nothing had yet been shown to make it probable that this interference would produce any such effect. He had not heard it contended, either here or elsewhere, that the contemplated change would either diminish the fund for the employment of labour, or that the number of labourers would be thereby increased. Such being the case, it was evident that the money rate of wages would not be diminished; and if the quantity of provisions was augmented, the purchasing power of those who were receiving wages would be increased. How, then, could it be said, that the labouring classes would be injured by the proposed change? But, said the hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien), this was peculiarly a tenant-farmer's question, and was not a question affecting the landlords. Now, they all knew that the tenant-farmer acted like any other capitalist, and employed his capital to obtain a profitable return. The moment his profits were reduced below the current amount of profits, he naturally transferred his capital to other modes of employment, in which he might obtain the ordinary return. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire sympathized very greatly with the tenant-farmer, and pathetically lamented that, by the oppression of the law, a man should be compelled to leave the home of his fathers, and quit the hamlet where the graves of his sires for generations were to be found; but no such sympathy was evinced for the poor labourer when vast schemes of emigration were planned, or when destitution compelled him to emigrate from his home, and wander forth from his native village to seek a livelihood in a foreign land. Though it might be a painful thing for the tenant farmer not to be able to retain his farm, still it was matter of paramount importance that there should be ample freedom given for the application of capital to land. He agreed with the noble Lord the Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire, that if this Bill should pass, it would give increased energy, increased capital, and increased returns; and that the land would produce six quarters, where it now only produced three. He could not understand how the agriculturists could anticipate as an evil that the price of corn would be lowered, and yet maintain that this was not a poor man's question. The noble Lord who had just spoken, had shown that almost the whole of the poor man's earnings was absorbed in the purchase of food, and that very little remained to him beyond what he paid for his subsistence. The agricultural labourer was not a person who had two meals a day. He had very seldom one good one. Such a blessing was unknown to him. But that was not so much the case with the manufacturing labourer. He was well fed, well clothed, and well housed; and by the protection of that House, his health was taken care of in the houses where he worked. On the other hand, the agricultural labourer was exposed to all the inclemencies of the climate; he was ill-clothed and ill-lodged. In the same breath that the hon. Member for Northamptonshire talked of the sufferings of the poor, he was keeping cheap food from them. Let it go forth to the country, that protection meant the keeping up the price of food from 19*s.* to 59*s.* the quarter. If it did not mean that, what, he should like to know did it mean? The landed interests had raised the price of food. For what purpose had they done so? In order to put money into their own pockets at the expense of the people. One of the methods resorted to was, by setting the labourers and the tenant-farmers at variance with each other. [Colonel Sibthorp: No.] The hon. and gallant Member said no; but the hon. Member for Rutlandshire had expressed his apprehension that corn would sink from 57*s.* to 19*s.* a quarter; that England would, as

it were, be flooded with corn; and that all the miseries consequent upon a depraved and degraded population would be entailed upon her. The advocates for protection might depend on it, that the people would see their object was personal and private. Notwithstanding, however, all the fears that had been expressed, he did not believe any great diminution in the price of wheat would follow upon the abolition of the duty, nor did he anticipate any sudden improvement in the condition of the labouring classes. What he did expect was, that by abolishing protective duties they gave a chance to the people of improving their condition, by increasing the market for the productions of English manufacturing skill and industry. So far from agreeing with the hon. Member for Huntingdon that increased fluctuation would be the result of multiplying the sources of supply, it struck him that one great national advantage of the change would be greater steadiness of price. At present they were subject to the vicissitudes of a single spot; under the new law they would go all over the globe for their supply. If Europe had a bad harvest, Providence might give a good one to America; if the harvest of America failed, Australia might supply the deficiency; and thus the monies and rate of fluctuation would diminish as the field from which they derived a supply was extended. He had been most anxious to guard himself against exaggerations on the one side, or on the other. He did not expect all the benefits which some anticipated from the change; and he was far from thinking that to the Corn Law were to be ascribed famine, disease, and death. He thought the passing of the measure ought to be accompanied with some great scheme of national education. Unless they took advantage of the opportunity, they might depend upon it, that however immediately benefited by the change, the population as it went on increasing would deteriorate until it reached its present condition. He congratulated them, in conclusion, that the leaders in that House appeared to be now given stedfastly to the performance of an act of justice; and he felt that he should not be doing an act of justice to his country, if he did not charge that House to take advantage of the great opportunity which they were now enabled to grasp, and when they had done something for the physical condition of the great body of the labouring classes, to make an effort to improve their moral and social condition, and thereby to regain that character which they had lately lost—the character of true and honest reformers!

Sir H. DOUGLAS moved the adjournment of the debate amid loud cries of "Adjourn," and "Go on." On the question of Adjournment being put,

Mr. H. HINDE said he was anxious, on the first night of the debate, to have expressed his opinion upon the measures brought forward by the right hon. Baronet. He would now take advantage of the question of adjournment which was before the House to speak on the main question, which he believed was perfectly in order. He had for a number of years enjoyed the honour of a seat in that House—he had represented one of the largest commercial constituencies in the kingdom—he had presented himself on five or six different occasions on the hustings before that constituency, to advocate the case of protection to native industry, not only as connected with agriculture, but with all other classes. He felt himself in this position, that though his constituency was a purely commercial one, his own sole connexion was with the agriculture of the country. In these circumstances he would not have felt himself justified in giving a vote for the continuance of protection to agriculture, if he had not felt the firm conviction that that protection was just, not to the agricultural classes alone, but to all classes of the community. He would in a few words endeavour to confine himself to the commercial view of the question. The question which they had heard repeated, *usque ad nauseam*, was this, that they ought to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market. That was said to be the maxim of common sense. With some qualifications he would admit that to be true; but if it were to be taken without qualification, he would say that it was the nostrum of unqualified nonsense. Unless they were sure of a certain and constant supply of food, its cheapness at one time would only aggravate the distress which the country would feel if from any circumstances, its price should be enhanced at another. The true policy of this, as well as of every other country, was to make their supply of food as free from the chances of uncertainty as possible—to increase as much as possible the home supply of food. But he noticed that when the right hon. Gentleman brought forward his measure, when he stated and combated the many arguments in favour of protection, that he omitted the very material argument which

he had often before urged, the necessity of our being independent for our supply of food of foreign nations. It was true that the noble Lord who moved the Address to the Throne did notice this argument, and he seemed to think that he had disposed of it by stating, that when we were at war with all Europe we never had a deficient supply of food. But did the noble Lord forget, that though we never had a deficient supply, still the prices were often excessive? For himself he was satisfied that if similar events were again to arrive, the price would again rise to 100*s.* the quarter. He believed that the immediate effect of the repeal of the Corn Laws would be to reduce the price of corn much lower than many hon. Gentlemen anticipated. The hon. Member for Radnorshire had stated, on the first night of the Session, that the freight of corn from Hamburgh to Hull was 1*s.* a quarter. He could state that the freight from the various ports of Europe to the port which he had the honour to represent was almost nominal. It might appear paradoxical, but it was true that ships coming from the various ports of Europe to Newcastle would bring corn over for no freight at all, and yet make a profit. It was well known that the principal trade of that port was an export trade in coals. Ships came there almost invariably loaded with ballast, and if they brought over corn, even if they carried it for nothing, they would save the dues which were imposed upon the discharging of ballast, and every sixpence of freight they got was so much clear profit, besides the saving on the ballast dues. He might be told, that at any rate this was a gain to the shipowner; but he would assure the House that they would now see all their ports crowded with foreign shipping, and that our ships would in vain maintain the struggle with them. He did not wish to limit the food of the country, but he believed that the plan of the right hon. Baronet was not the measure which ought to have been proposed. He had supported the Canada Corn Bill. He was prepared to go farther, and to extend the benefit of that measure to all our Colonies. By doing that they would have secured cheap prices to the people—they would have encouraged their own shipping, and they would have given prosperity to their Colonies. On the other hand, by the plan they had proposed, they would not only fail in their objects, but they were about to strike a severe blow at a trade which was beginning to increase. The noble Lord the Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire had stated as one of the benefits to be derived from this measure, that when the seasons were unfortunate in one atmosphere, they would in all probability be favourable in another. But did not that condition apply to the Colonies of this country, which extended through every quarter of the globe? so that this inestimable blessing might be secured to them, without displacing their native industry, or trusting to the caprice of foreigners. There was one topic in connexion with this question, which had already been commented on by several Members, which he also would not refrain from noticing. The noble Lord the Member for Liverpool, and several hon. Members, had stated their objection to this measure in far more eloquent language than he could pretend to; but they concluded by saying, that they would rather support it, than damage the existence of Her Majesty's Government. Now, he would not yield to any of those hon. Members in personal respect both for the head of the Government, and for its other Members. But he could not take the same view which other hon. Gentlemen did of his duty, in respect of this question. He could not do so, even if his vote would be available for the purpose of supporting the Government. But was the noble Lord so blind, could he lend himself to so palpable a fallacy, as to suppose that any support which might now be given to the right hon. Gentleman, could long support that Gentleman in office, after they were separated from the party which had so long supported them. He would not cast such discredit upon the foresight of the right hon. Gentleman himself, as to suppose that he had the slightest idea of its being possible, after the present Session, for the present Government to continue in office. When this measure was carried, for carry it he would, he knew that by an inevitable necessity he must hand over his Government to those who had been the earliest promoters of the measure. He, for one, would rather see the Government of the country in the hands of the right hon. Baronet, than in the hands of the noble Lord and the right hon. Gentlemen to whom he had so long been opposed; but he must do justice to their honour, as he had done justice to the honour of the right hon. Baronet. He believed that their interest in the welfare of the country was equally sincere; but he believed they were equally mistaken with the right hon. Baronet. Of this he was convinced, that in voting against the pro-

position of the right hon. Gentleman, in forming one of a minority against him, though a minority of his usual supporters, he was not hastening the destined and inevitable destruction of the present Government. The right hon. Gentleman, he believed, owed no allegiance to his party more than his party owed to him; but without the assistance of that party he would never have been in power, and he ought not to use the power which they had given him in order to ensure their defeat. The right hon. Baronet hed recently stated on the first night of the Session, that it was his intention to have called his party together, to have stated his views, if possible to have relieved himself from the cares of Government, and then left it to those to bring in the measures to whom they legitimately belonged. Had the right hon. Gentleman done this, no blame would have attached to him. But he stated that a great calamity had befallen this country, and that in Ireland there had been an alarming failure in the potato crop. Now, he believed there was no natural connexion between the remedies proposed, and the famine apprehended. They were doing nothing for the poor in Ireland, whose potatoes had failed, by bringing in cheap corn. The only remedy would have been to vote a grant of money to supply them with the means of subsistence. If the right hon. Gentleman had proposed this, he was sure the House and the country would have cheerfully responded to it. But what connexion was there between the failure of the potatoes, and the remedy proposed by the right hon. Gentleman? He did not wish to speak lightly of the calamities that were said to be hanging over the sister country, or of the measures of the Government; but he must say that that calamity, if it were to happen at all, would happen very soon; the remedy would not take effect for three years. What was there at all extraordinary in the condition of the country to call for such a measure as this? It was an error, a great error on the part of the present Government, that they had not that wisdom which was so essential to statesmen—that they had not, to use the language already quoted in the House, the sound discretion which consisted in knowing when to let well alone. They all knew the inscription on the tomb of the Italian:—"I was well, I wished to be better, and here I am;" and he much feared that this sentence would form the epitaph of the present Government.

Debate again adjourned.

House adjourned at a quarter to Two o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Friday, February 13, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—*Reported.* Administration of Criminal Justice.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Landowners and others, of Compton Martin, and numerous other places, against the Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Earl Somers, from Owners and Occupiers of Land in the County of Hereford, for Protection to Agriculture.—By the Earl of Clarendon, from Tenant Farmers in the Eastern District of Forfarshire, in favour of Free Trade.

RAILWAYS.

The EARL of DALHOUSIE, in pursuance of notice, moved the following Resolutions:—

"Resolved—That it is the opinion of this Committee that the Standing Orders of this House with regard to Railway Bills should, as respects Railway Bills commenced in this House during the present Session, be altered in the following Particulars:—

"That Standing Order No. 219 be altered in the following Particulars, viz.:—

"That on the Bill being reported to the House from the Committee on the Bill, or at any Time previously, on the Petition of the Parties to such Bill, or any of them, the Bill shall be referred to the Standing Order Committee, which shall inquire whether the Standing Orders, the compliance with which is directed to be proved before or reported by the Standing Order Committee previously to the Third Reading of the Bill, have been complied with; and the Committee shall report on the Matters referred to them, in the same Manner as they are directed to report on other Matters referred to them by the Standing Orders.

"That Five clear Days' Notice be given of such Meeting of the Committee, and that it be proved to the Satisfaction of the Committee that the Standing Orders had been complied with Five clear Days before such Meeting of the Committee.

"That the Standing Order Committee shall not meet to consider the Compliance with such of the Standing Orders as are directed to be proved before them, until after the Expiration of Seven clear Days from the Presentation of the Petition, if the Bill relate to England, or until after the Expiration of Ten clear Days, if the Bill relate to Scotland or Ireland.

"That every Petition complaining of a Non-compliance with such of the Standing Orders as are directed to be proved before the Standing Order Committee, subsequently to the First Reading of the Bill, shall be presented Three clear Days before the Meeting of the Committee to consider such Standing Orders.

"That Standing Order No. 220 be altered in the following particulars, viz.:—

"That the service of every application required to be made to the owners or reputed owners, les-

sees or reputed Lessees, and Occupiers, by the Fourth Paragraph of the said Standing Order, may, unless a Petition complaining of the Want of due Service of such Application, shall have been referred to the Standing Order Committee, be proved by the Evidence of the Agent or Solicitor for the Bill, stating that he gave Directions for the Service of such Application in the manner and within the Time required by the Standing Orders, and that he believes that such Application was so served; but in case the Standing Order Committee shall not be satisfied with the Evidence of the Agent or Solicitor, the Service of such Application shall be proved in the usual Manner.

"That no Bill commencing in this House, and empowering any Company already constituted by Act of Parliament to execute any Work other than than for which it was originally established, shall be read a Third Time, unless the Committee on Standing Orders shall have specially reported that the Requisitions contained in Paragraph No. 5 of such Order have been complied with.

"That Standing Order No. 224 be altered in the following Particulars, viz.:—

"That as respects all Railway Bills which shall commence in this House during the present Session of Parliament, it shall be proved to the Satisfaction of the Standing Order Committee, that a Sum equal to One-Twentieth Part of the Amount subscribed has been deposited in the Manner required by the said Standing Order, on or before the Sixth Day of February Instant; and it shall likewise be proved to the Satisfaction of the said Committee, before the Third Reading of such Bill, that a further Sum equal to One Twentieth Part of the Amount subscribed has been deposited in like manner; and that the Amendment made to the said Standing Order on the Sixth Instant be further amended, by substituting the word 'Second' for the word 'First.'

"That Standing Order No. 225 be altered in the following Particulars, viz.:

"That it shall be sufficient if the Proof required to be given by the last-mentioned Standing Order, be adduced before the Standing Order Committee, at any time previous to the Third Reading of the Bill.

"That all the Standing Orders applicable to Railway Bills, except such of them or such part of them as are altered by or inconsistent with the aforesaid Standing Order, shall apply to the Railway Bills commenced in this House during the present Session of Parliament, and to the Proceedings in such Bills."

Resolutions agreed to.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, February 13, 1846.

Minutes.] New Writs. For County of Nottingham (Northern Division) *v.* Henry Gally Knight, Esq. deceased; for Northampton County (Southern Division), *v.* William Ralph Cartwright, Esq., Chiltern Hundreds; for Gloucester County (Eastern Division), *v.* Hon. Francis Charteris, Chiltern Hundreds.

Public Bills.—*Reported.* Fishery Piers and Harbours (Ireland); Drainage, &c. (Ireland).

Petitions Presented. By several hon. Members, from a great number of places, against Repeal of the Corn Laws; and, also, by several hon. Members, from various places, in favour of Repeal.—By several hon. Members, from an immense number of places, against the Government Measure relating to Customs and Corn Importation; and by Mr. Henry Baring, Mr. Moffatt, and Sir Robert Peel, from Marlborough, Birstwith, Haddington, and Logie Pert, in favour of the proposed Measure.

PETITIONS AGAINST RAILWAY BILLS.

Mr. STRUTT, in bringing up the Report of the Sub-Committee of which he is the Chairman (No. 1), took occasion to ask the opinion of the House with regard to the course to be adopted in treating petitions against Railway Bills referred to the Committees on Standing Orders, which were not themselves prepared in compliance with the provisions of the Standing Order No. 111-A, which required "that the name or short title by which such Bill had been entered at the Private Bill Office should appear in the beginning of such petition." In one of the cases (the Exeter, Yeovil, and Dorchester) which had been referred to the Committee of which he was chairman, there were no fewer than five petitions against the Bill, not one of which complied with that Standing Order. The same thing had occurred with several others. Of course if the irregularity had been detected when the petitions had been presented at the Table of the House, they would not have been referred to the Select Committee on Private Bills, and could not have come before him. As the case stood, however, the Sub-Committee felt that it was one not relating to themselves alone, but to the practice of the House; and they, therefore, resolved to lay the matter before it, and to take the opinion of the House upon it.

Mr. GREENE, though anxious at all times to enforce the Orders of the House, entertained some doubts whether the Committee would be justified in rejecting those petitions. Although the Order 111-A was plain and definite enough, there was no penalty whatever attached to it. It did not say that the parties who should neglect to comply with its provisions should not be heard; and under such circumstances it would be rather hard that after parties had presented petitions in a form that they had no expectation would be refused, they should be refused a hearing without some degree of notice. In the present instance he thought that they must pass over the irregularity. It would be utterly impossible, in the enormous mass of petitions on Railway Bills presented nightly in the House, to observe whether they were or were not prepared in compliance with the Standing Orders. The Committee should have power

to deal with them; and he should, therefore, move, on Monday next—

"That it be an Instruction to the Select Committee on Petitions for Private Bills, and to all Committees upon Private Bills, not to hear parties on any Petition hereafter referred to them, which shall not be prepared and signed in strict conformity with the Rules and Orders of this House."

That instruction would comprehend every irregularity, not that alone under consideration, and Committees would be thereby empowered to deal with them at once. In the present instance, the House having sent the petitions to the Committee for consideration, the Committee could not refuse to entertain them; but on all future occasions there would be a strict rule adopted, of which parties would have full notice.

Mr. ENTWISLE thought it very hard that parties promoting Railway Bills should be put to immense expense and inconvenience to meet those who made objections on the grounds of non-compliance with the Standing Orders of the House, when those objectors themselves had not complied with the Standing Orders on Petitions, while the grounds of objection were frequently of the most trifling description. He thought that there was no excuse for parties who, in complaining of non-compliance with Standing Orders, did not themselves comply with them. They should not be heard.

Mr. STRUTT said, that the omission having been in the House, and not before the Committee, the Committee could not properly deal with it.

Mr. ELLIS thought the wording of the Standing Order 111-A, not itself sufficiently definite. It required the name or short title of the Bill to be placed at "the beginning of the petition." Now the object was to have it placed as a heading, for the insertion of the name or short title in the first paragraph would not be sufficient. The House should make the Standing Orders definite, complete, and clear.

Mr. GISBORNE could not see why any indulgence should be shown to those parties who complained of the non-compliance of others with the Standing Orders of the House, by petitions not prepared in compliance with them. These petitions should not be received, and if his hon. Friend persisted in admitting them, he (Mr. Gisborne) would divide the House upon it.

Sir W. HEATHCOTE said, that it was the House that must deal with the petition, for the Committee had not the power. There was a distinction between this case and others under the Standing Orders. The Standing Order 111-A, required certain conditions to be complied with; but when the Committees were required to ascertain that they were complied with, it was so stated in the Standing Order itself. When, however, the House passed over its own rule, and referred a petition to the Committee, it could not be rejected by the Committee, but, in case of an irregularity, it must come to the House for instruction. The hon. Member for Derby, therefore, was right in reporting the matter to the House.

Sir GEORGE CLERK thought the matter required serious consideration. There would be some difficulty in enforcing the provisions of the Standing Orders at times—for instance, in the case of parties four or five hundred miles off forwarding petitions against Bills. They might be sufficiently able to give such description as would serve to identify the Bill they desired to oppose; but they might be unable to ascertain the exact name or short title by which the Bill was described in the Private Bill Office. He thought it would be most advisable that the Report should be received and laid on the Table. It could be then printed and taken into further consideration on Monday.

Report accordingly ordered to be further taken into consideration on Monday.

AFFRAY IN THE NORTH.

Mr. JAMES wished to ask his right hon. Friend whether Ministers had received any official information respecting a sad affray which had taken place in the north of England: it had occurred not far from Penrith, between English and Irish labourers, on what was called the Shap Fells, on the railway line from Lancaster to Carlisle. There had been several most savage and ferocious encounters between persons armed with knives, scythes, spades, and other weapons, and, besides bodily injuries, several poor Irishmen's huts had been razed to the ground, and all their little property destroyed. One Irishman had been attacked in his cottage, and, in the presence of his weeping wife and children, beaten in such a manner that his life was despaired of. The whole district was in a state of the greatest excitement and alarm, and several troops of yeomanry cavalry had found the utmost difficulty in suppressing the tumult. If the right hon. Baronet had received official information, he (Mr. James) wished also to learn whether any steps had been taken to aid the civil force for the preservation of the public peace?

Sir J. GRAHAM said, his hon. Friend seemed to know more of the matter than he

did. He had received no official information respecting the disturbance; all he knew was from the ordinary channels of information. He had received no information from magistrates of the prolongation of the affray, and he had therefore every reason to believe that the public peace had been restored.

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE AND THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

Sir R. H. INGLIS referred to certain questions of which he had given notice, relative to Westminster-bridge and the new Palace of Westminster. Seeing the Secretary for the Treasury in his place, and knowing that he must have much information on the subject, he was anxious to put to him the questions he had intended to ask the Chief Commissioner of the Woods and Forests. He could not expect the House to recollect, but he believed that the right hon. Gentleman well remembered, that on the 4th of August last he had put certain questions as to the state in which Westminster-bridge had been left. On that occasion the First Lord of the Treasury said, that he had received a communication some days before, and that as soon as the Session was closed, he, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, would take the matter into consideration. He wished to be informed whether that report had since been considered—what was the decision upon it—what sums of money had been laid out upon the repair (if such a word were applicable) of Westminster-bridge, and whether Government were prepared to appoint a Committee on the subject? When the right hon. Gentleman had answered these questions respecting Westminster-bridge, he would follow them up by others regarding the new Palace of Westminster.

Mr. CARDWELL had to state, that after the close of the last Session, according to his promise, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, in conjunction with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had taken into consideration the report of the Committee which sat upon the subject. The Commissioners for the repair of Westminster-bridge had no funds for the construction of a new bridge, and the course taken by the Treasury was this: Instructions had been given to the Commissioners to obtain weekly reports from the engineers of the state and security of the bridge, and whenever these reports contained a notice of the slightest alteration, they were to be communicated to the Treasury. Special directions were given to the engineers, that if any circumstances occurred requiring particular notice, the attention of the Treasury should be called to them. It was thus evident that ample care had been taken of the safety of the public as regarded Westminster-bridge; and he hoped that the hon. Baronet would not feel it necessary to move for a Committee.

Sir R. INGLIS observed, that such an answer was most unsatisfactory, and he would revert to the subject hereafter. He now came to his other question—when was it likely that the House would be able to enter upon its new locality? [*A laugh.*] He understood the meaning of that laugh to be, that no man expected the right hon. Secretary to the Treasury to be able to answer that question. His question was, when Government anticipated that this House would be able to enter its new accommodations in the new Palace of Westminster. He referred not merely to the room in which the Members were to sit in their legislative capacity, but to the Committee rooms also. The expectation held out at the end of the last Session was, that they would be ready by the commencement of 1847, but that seemed not likely to be realized; and he wished also to know whether Ministers would consent to the appointment of a Committee to inquire why the expectation was to be postponed?

Mr. CARDWELL had some reason to apprehend that the hope entertained that the new Houses of Parliament would be ready by the commencement of the Session of 1847 might possibly not be realized. He was aware that some causes of delay had occurred, and he was afraid that they would partly account for the postponement. He could assure the hon. Baronet that these causes of delay had received the most anxious consideration, and every exertion had been made to accomplish the object. He could only conclude, as before, with expressing a hope that the hon. Baronet would not think it necessary or expedient that a Committee should be appointed.

DEFECT IN THE CORN LAW.

Mr. J. COLLETT referred to a statement, that in consequence of a singular flaw in the Corn Law, the revenue had suffered to a considerable extent. The right hon. Gentleman had promised to give an answer to the question he (Mr. Collett) had put, in a few days, and he wished now to be in-

formed whether the revenue had suffered, and to what extent?

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, that the case was precisely this:—In consequence of a construction put upon the Act of 1842, certain parties claimed a right on a particular day to import a quantity of corn free of duty: the question was tried in the Court of Queen's Bench, and a decision was come to in favour of the right of the Crown to levy the duty. The parties carried the case into the Exchequer Chamber, and there all the Judges reversed the decision of the Court of King's Bench. At present it was under consideration whether it would be desirable, on the part of the Crown, to carry the question to a higher tribunal. The account in the newspapers, supposing the ultimate issue to be adverse to the Crown, was considerably exaggerated. He could not precisely state the amount of loss, but he believed it would not amount to 30,000*l.*

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE (FOURTH NIGHT).

On the Order of the Day for the resumption of the Adjourned Debate on the Corn Laws,

SIR HOWARD DOUGLAS said: I rise with a degree of pain which I shall not attempt to express, but which I am sure my right hon. Friend believes and understands, to make a few observations on the momentous subject which he has brought forward; and to explain and declare the vote which it is my intention to give, against withdrawing protection from British agriculture, and against the extinction of the protective principle. I was brought forward for the representation of Liverpool on the colonial, and consequently on the protective principle. I connect significantly these expressions, because I shall have occasion to revert to them hereafter. Although perfectly unfettered, and unpledged, I yet distinctly and explicitly avowed myself the advocate of that principle at my election, and I have supported it accordingly with my voice and vote in this House. I have opposed all the Motions that have been made for the repeal of the Corn Laws. I took part in the discussion, and opposed the Motion of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent for the repeal of all Import Duties. I have carefully revised and reconsidered all I have said in this House and elsewhere upon these important subjects. I find nothing to regret, excepting the imperfect manner in which I expressed myself; and at any rate, I find nothing to retract. I have bestowed the most calm and dispassionate consideration on this momentous question. I have listened with profound attention to all that has been said on both sides, in this protracted debate; and, far from being shaken, I find my opinions confirmed. I am very sensible of the difficulties of the present time, of the sad crisis to which this question has been precipitated, and of the changes which have taken place in others. But I am unchanged: my opinions have undergone no alteration, and my vote must conform with my opinion. I shall first request the indulgence of the House to make a few observations upon the commercial part of the question. I shall then offer a few, and but a very few, arguments, on the agricultural part of the question; for ably and manfully has that interest been defended. I shall lastly beg leave to make a few practical observations as to the effects of this measure on those great remote interests, the colonial interests, which are not represented, and which it appears to me are not altogether rightly understood in this House. I concur in the accuracy of the figures referred to by the right hon. Baronet, though I think they are not carried far enough back; but I cannot admit the conclusions which the right hon. Baronet draws from the prosperity of the last three years. The period was not of sufficient duration; the circumstances were peculiar, and did not altogether form a criterion by which it would be safe to make so mighty a change, in the commercial, fiscal, and financial system of this country. It is true that the value of British and Irish produce and manufactures exported to all parts of the world, rose from 47,381,000*l.* in 1842, to 58,584,000*l.* in 1844, showing an increase of 11,200,000*l.* But 1842 was a year of the greatest depression, and that depression was not occasioned by the Corn Laws, nor has the restored prosperity been unaccompanied by the Corn Laws. The distress of 1842 was attributed to a concurrence of causes sufficient to account for that depression. Facilities of credit; increase of manufacturing establishments; improvements in mechanical power; excitement and stimulus to production; depression in the United States; falling off in our exports to the United States; derangement in the monetary affairs of the United States; the China war; stagnation of general commerce dur-

ing the then recent alarm of war; and I believe I am correct in stating that the right hon. Baronet said "he could not excite a hope that any alteration in the Corn Laws would be a remedy for evils which, in a great manufacturing country like this, seem separable from that system." Now taking the year 1839 next before that depression commenced, the exports were 53,233,580*l.*, so that the exports of 1844 were only 5,351,342*l.* above what they had been before that depression took place. If the recent, and still existing prosperity had been consequent to the repeal of protection, or to an experimental suspension of the Corn Laws, this question would stand on very different grounds. But the preceding distress was not attributed generally to the Corn Laws: these have accompanied the restoration of prosperity; and whilst it cannot be denied that this has been with the Corn Laws, many are of opinion that it is by the protecting policy and by the Corn Laws, that this restoration has been produced; and I am of that opinion. The Gentlemen opposite denied that this would ever be so, unless the Corn Laws were repealed. "Do what you like," did they oftentimes say, "prosperity will never more revisit these shores, will never more attend the manufactures and commerce of this country, until the Corn Laws shall have been repealed." But prosperity has returned, and yet the Corn Laws do exist. I admit that the relaxations in the Tariff of 1842 have in many respects, and upon the whole, been beneficial; and I voted for them, with that impression. But I am not disposed to admit that the success of a moderate and experimental alteration in the degrees of protection, warrants the utter repudiation of the principles on which this Empire has been constructed, and by which it yet holds together. I have compiled, with a good deal of care, a table of the declared value of British and Irish produce and manufactures exported, from a late period of the last century, to the present time, showing separately the exports to Foreign States and to British possessions abroad. I have inserted the quantity of foreign wheat, and wheat flour, imported, and the price of corn, in corresponding columns; and I find many important deductions and proofs in support of my opinions, are obtained from this table. With respect to the increase in the value of exports in 1844, it appears that 2,611,797*l.* was to British possessions, namely, to British India and British North America; whilst, with few exceptions, the exports to foreign countries were in some cases not so great, and in others not greater than they had been at some previous time. The exports to Russia in 1844 were nearly as in 1837; to Portugal less than in 1827; to Spain less than in 1829; to the United States about what it was in 1838, and 4,000,000*l.* less than in 1836. Even to France the exports of British and Irish productions in 1844 (2,656,259*l.*), were less than in 1841 and 1842, which were 2,902,002*l.* and 3,193,939*l.*; and in the year 1844 we exported to France no less than 65,714,490 francs* to pay in hard money (*numeraire*) for her productions, in exchange for which, France does not coextensively take ours; and this is the way in which we shall have to pay for French carriages, silks, gloves, shoes, &c., which are to be let in upon our unprotected artisans; and the whole table shows that the colonial trade is less subject to vicissitude than the foreign trade, and that it increases, though with some fluctuations, steadily. I have never argued this question in terms of agricultural protection, in the abstract; I always took the enlarged and general question it involves, that the repeal of protection on agriculture must be followed by the repeal of protection on all other interests. But little did I think that they were to come together; suddenly and unexpectedly to burst upon us, like a clap of thunder. My advocacy of protection is for the interests of no particular class, and least of all for the interests of that class which I have the honour to address. My advocacy of protection is for the interests of all classes of artisans, mechanics, and operatives, employed in the several branches of British native industry. I shall not now discuss the difficult subject of the relation between the price of labour and that of food. Probably, no fixed relation subsists; but however this may be, the price of labour greatly depends on the state of the labour market. This, however, I am prepared to assert, that when labour is not in demand, when it is redundant, seeking employment, labour is incapable of competing with capital, even in internal competition. The extreme conditions in the social state of this country, abundantly establish this fact—capital accumulated at one end, depression and privation occasionally at the other. But when, moreover, the sphere of competition is extended, and un-

* Tableau Général du Commerce de la France, 1844, Administration des Douanes.

protected British labour is made to run against protected foreign labour, foreign competition must further beat down the efficacy and value of British industry, and of British labour its main element, in relation to foreign labour, not only to, but beneath, that level. The repeal of the Corn Laws would displace productions of British agriculture, in British markets, by the free importation of foreign corn; whilst the exporting countries would not admit British manufactured productions freely to displace foreign productions, in their markets; and thus British agriculture and the home market would be greatly injured and deadened. I shall not repeat what I have heretofore said on this part of the subject, further than to assert that the past depression, and the restoration of prosperity abundantly show, and I am prepared to prove this, that an increased importation of foreign corn does not produce a corresponding exportation of British manufactures. I refer now to the figures I have compiled to make a few observations upon that maxim of the economists, which affirms that the importation of foreign corn produces a contemporaneous and coextensive exportation of British manufactured productions. Was the year 1836 a prosperous year? The exports of that year were 53,368,572*l.* The importation of wheat and wheat flour was a minimum; it was 861,156 quarters, and the price was 48*s.* 9*d.* Were 1840, 1841, and 1842, prosperous years? The exports of British productions declined to 51,406,430*l.* in 1840, and to 47,381,023*l.* in 1842; but the importation of foreign wheat and wheat flour in those years was a maximum—namely, 2,526,645 quarters in 1840; 2,910,263 quarters in 1841; and 3,111,290 qrs. in 1842; and the prices 63*s.* 3*d.*, 64*s.* 3*d.*, and 70*s.* 3*d.* respectively; and by a maximum price, I mean, greater than the importation of foreign wheat had ever been since 1697. Were the years 1843 and 1844 unprosperous years? The wheat imported was 843,419 in the former year, and 1,145,833 in 1844, and the prices 50*s.* 1*d.* and 51*s.* 3*d.* Now, according to the theory of the economists, the prosperous years ought to have been unprosperous; and the years of depression the reverse. This establishes, I think, the truth of what I had the honour of saying in this House on a former occasion; that there is a great difference between that plenty and low price which are produced by abundance of home production, and that which is produced by unlimited foreign importation—that the one quickens, the other deadens the home market—that England is England's best customer—and that the contemporaneous exportation from England in return for foreign corn, would be chiefly in British gold. Perfect free trade consists in the absence of restrictions on both sides. In this case there is a coextensive and contemporaneous exchange of the productions of each other. To the truth of this proposition, in the abstract, I entirely agree; and could we only prevail upon foreign nations to meet us fairly on such terms, I should not be here to oppose such an intercourse. But unreciprocated free trade consists in freedom at one hand, and prohibition at the other; liberality here, and the reverse there; an absence of import duties in the United Kingdom, an increase of them everywhere else, to countervail what we may do to get down the cost of production. We cannot combat rival Tariffs, directly or indirectly, without subjecting British industry to severe depressions in relation to foreign industry and foreign labour. Now, this is the disadvantageous condition of trade into which we are about to rush. The right hon. Baronet admits this disadvantage, but says he entertains the most confident belief that foreign nations will imitate our example, and meet us fairly on the basis of free trade. I wish my right hon. Friend may be right; but I feel very confident that such will not be the case. There may be a modification, or relaxation in the degrees of protection, but it will be chiefly on the raw articles; and unless foreign nations repeal altogether, not only the denomination, but extinguish the principle of protection, as we are about to do, we shall still be subject to the disadvantage which I endeavour to represent. We have for many years been setting the example of relaxing our protective system, in hopes that other nations would follow our example. We made these indications to France many years ago, by considerable reductions of duties on her productions; and the only alteration she has made, is to lower the duties on raw and wrought materials, that she may compete the better with our manufactured articles. No nation deserves less than France, any further relaxation on our part: for although our exports have greatly increased to that country since 1827, (but they have fallen off considerably since 1842,) yet this has rather been in articles necessary to her industry, than in British manufactured articles; and we exported in money

to France in 1844, no less than 65,714,490 francs value, to pay for articles which we take from her, and for which she does not take payment in British productions; and this is the way in which French carriages, silks, shoes, millinery, gloves, &c. with which unprotected British artisans are to be inundated, will be paid. Neither the German's Union, nor Belgium, nor any other foreign nation, will extinguish the principle or so relax the degrees of protection, as to meet us fairly in free trade; and whatever may be said of or expected from the United States of America, I feel entirely confident that, do what we may, they will never follow our example to this extent, nor to any extent that will withdraw substantial protection from their own interests—their native industry. I have shown this to be the settled policy of the United States, from the time of Washington downwards; and even Mr. Polk, the present President, has distinctly recommended, that a just and reasonable protection should be given to all interests, agricultural, manufacturing, commercial, and maritime. There may be some reductions of duties on imports, some revision of the Tariff; the new duties may be denominated revenue duties, but they will nevertheless be efficient protective and restrictive duties. It matters not to us practically whether these be called revenue duties, and reported to the committee of ways and means, or denominated protective duties, and reported to the committee of manufactures. What Mr. Polk denominates revenue duties, is that amount of duty which produces a maximum of revenue on that article. Probably the amount of duties may not be pushed so high, but however this may be they will be essentially and effectually, protective; and I do think it would be well that we should wait to ascertain, positively, what foreign nations, generally or severally will do, before we rush into this rash and, as it appears to me, gambling speculation. Import duties imposed upon one side, deprive the country against which they are adopted, of the increased market, and consequently of the increased productive industry, which international intercourse would create, if fairly reciprocated; and the due equilibrium can only be restored by imposing retaliatory duties. Smith expressly says, book iv., chap. 11—

"To impose duties upon foreign, for the encouragement of native industry, when burthens are laid upon it by foreign nations," (and what foreign nation does not lay burthens upon our industry?) "is one of the cases in which it is advantageous to protect in this way the home productions."

For to lay suitable duties upon the productions of the foreigner, who lays burthens upon yours, does not give the monopoly of the home market to the home producer, nor turn towards any particular employment more capital and labour than would naturally go there. It only hinders that amount of those actually engaged, from being turned away into a less natural direction, and leaves the competition between foreign and domestic industry upon the same footing as before the protecting duty so laid and retaliated. And I shall show hereafter that Huskisson seriously intended this with respect to the United States' Tariff of 1824, if the propositions held out to foreign nations by his Trade Acts of 1826 had not been fairly met. Adam Smith's observation is obviously true. Protecting duties on one side, destroy the equivalent expression; it is like expunging a value from one side of an equation, without compensating for it on the other. There cannot be two prices for the same article in the same market. The foreign consumer will not pay more for a British than for a domestic article of equal quality. The exporter cannot pay the rival duty, for, if so, he would sell at a loss, or be undersold by the foreign rival; and, therefore, to compete with foreign protected markets, British articles must be produced so much cheaper as to enter into this competition. The cost of production must therefore be reduced. This is most immediately and readily done by reducing the wages of labour, and it is most important to remark that it is precisely in times of pressure, when profits are most bare, and labour most in want of employment, that this takes place, and that mechanical labour is most extended: this not only displaces manual labour in times of pressure, but, by so much, precludes it from participating in future prosperity. In all these transactions in which the foreign exporter of goods, which we take from him, (corn to wit,) does not take payment in the productions of the United Kingdom, a direct loss is inflicted on the British shipowner, and that almost without compensation; for whatever be the effect of the circuitous transaction, in producing, through other countries, (third markets,) indirect demands for British productions, the benefit of the freight will go chiefly to the foreign shipowner. It is difficult to trace the various uses of the money produced by the bills drawn on Great Britain, by the exporters of

foreign productions, for which they will not take British produce in return. The economists say truly that foreigners do not send us theirs gratuitously, and that they must be paid for: but those who assert that the indirect transaction is, in the long run, equally beneficial with the contemporaneous exchange, very imperfectly understand the nature of the indirect transaction, and incorrectly trace it. That part of the remittance which is applied to pay for the productions of the United Kingdom, comes direct to this country, by bills, and the employment of that part is easily traced to that purpose. But a great number of the bills drawn by foreign exporters are negotiated abroad, not to pay for the export of British productions, but for that, say, of foreign and foreign colonial productions which may be imported into the United Kingdom from any place not being a British possession, in foreign ships, of any country, to be warehoused for exportation. Without attempting here to trace the particular investment in which the proceeds of these bills for the extension of foreign industry may be made, and without denying that a great part of the foreign productions, so transiting to foreign countries, through the United Kingdom, are paid for in British productions exported in return for the foreign productions, yet it is clear that this circuitous trade is chiefly carried on in foreign vessels. Observe, also, that a great part of the money produced by the bills drawn by the foreign exporter (of the bullion, for instance, remitted to pay for grain) is absorbed into the active and productive capital of the exporting countries, and laid out in extending that industry which thus competes so successfully with ours, and rather in promoting commercial intercourse between foreign nations, than with the United Kingdom. Thus whatever be the end of the circuitous transactions, the money payments made by us must first afford profitable investment to the rival interests of foreign nations, and employment of foreign labour, to the disadvantage of British productions and British labour; and the indirect transaction originating in a disadvantageous state of trade, and of navigation, can, by no sophistry, be shown to end in advantage. The noble Lord the Member for the West Riding observed forcibly, the increase of population requires additional means and sources of subsistence. It appears to me, that by maintaining the Corn Laws we shall best provide for this, by extending and improving the cultivation of Great Britain and Ireland. It seems a strange proposition, and one contrary to all experience, that the way to encourage the production of articles of any kind, is, to expose that branch of industry to unequal competition. But can we not find, do we not possess, in our Colonies, unbounded sources —rich fields of virgin fertility, such as the noble Lord has depicted in the United States, from which we may derive unlimited supplies of British produced food? I had imagined a species of free trade among ourselves, by which we might acquire, freely, the agricultural productions, as well as others, of our Colonies, if we were really to treat them as if counties of the country. There was a right move made in that direction in the passing of the Canada Corn Bill, for which I voted with great pleasure; but this admirable principle is very imperfectly carried out. I heard with great pleasure the other night the hon. Members for Montrose, Stockport, and Cockermouth, express their wish to see this great principle extended to other Colonies; and their belief, or hope, that the time was now come when the Colonies, generally, were really to be incorporated with the United Kingdom as integral parts thereof, and that thus a new era of colonial management was about to commence. Why, Sir, from the moment that the protective principle shall unhappily be extinguished, not only will the Canada Corn Bill, though at present subsisting in the form of a solemn compact between the Imperial Parliament, which originated, and the Canadian Parliament which re-enacted that measure—not only from that moment will this compact be absolutely annulled, but the colonial system itself will be virtually dissolved. For the Canada Corn Bill will become wholly inoperative,—absolutely nullified. How much of grain do those hon. Members think will come from Canada, Prince Edward's Island, and Australia, when the ports of the United Kingdom shall have been opened to foreign corn? Not a particle of the United States' bread stuffs will transit through Canada, by the costly inland communications which are now opening for that purpose, to be taken down the St. Lawrence to Quebec to give the British shipowner the benefit of the freight home, and the British merchant the advantage of the transaction; and should this measure pass, the United States may well desist from the measures they have adopted (the recent Transit Act) to countervail and defeat the important advantages

which the Canada Corn Acts were intended to confer. What becomes then of the agricultural prosperity of Canada? Canada is, essentially, an agricultural Colony. I well remember that in 1826, when holding the government of one of the British North American provinces, under a distinguished and justly celebrated statesman, Mr. Huskisson, at a time when emigration to Canada was becoming brisk, and Canada corn was only admitted to the United Kingdom in limited quantity, and at a considerable duty—I think *5s.*, to have written to Mr. Huskisson, a Despatch* in which, referring to his Trade Acts and to the measures proposed by His Majesty's then Government to promote the permanent interests of the British possessions abroad, I endeavoured to represent the rapid progress then making in British North America in agricultural operations, and the necessity of improving inland communications and navigation throughout British North America, and to adopt a steady course of policy which should ensure to the Canadas, at all times, external markets for the consumption of their agricultural productions, in the markets of the United Kingdom, and in those their sister Colonies in the west. I represented that no distress can be so severe as that which must result from a population extending itself over unbounded fields of virgin fertility, peopled by emigrants from the mother country as a measure of relief to ourselves from the occasional pressure of unemployed labour, if at any time we should fail in ensuring them markets for the productions of their industry. And it does now become a matter of the very greatest importance to consider, what is to become of the Canadas, if we now fail in this duty to them by withdrawing protection from the interests we have created, and the industry we have cherished. The United States will not free trade with British North America; and if so, and we withdraw protection from the productions of the Canadas, as, by the extinction of the protective principle, and the repeal of the differential duties, we are asked to do, it is quite obvious what the tendency must be. I have often imagined—and it was for this that I moved for, and obtained the order of this House for, the extensive returns which are now preparing, namely, the various colonial tariffs and commercial relations at present subsisting between all the Colonies of the Empire and the mother country, and between the Colonies themselves—that it might really be possible to treat Colonies like counties of the country, not only in direct trade with the United Kingdom, but in commercial intercourse with each other, by free trade among ourselves, under a reasonable moderate degree of protection from without, and so resolve the United Kingdom, and all her Colonies and possessions, into a commercial union such as might defy all rivalry, and defeat all combinations. Then might colonization proceed on a gigantic scale—then might British capital animate British labour, on British soil, for British objects, throughout the extended dominions of the British Empire. Such an union is the United States of America—a confederation of sovereign States, leagued together for commercial and political purposes, with the most perfect free trade within, and a stringent protection from without; and signally, surely, has that commercial league succeeded and flourished. Such an union, too, is the German Customs' League; and it has succeeded to an extent that really is, in so short a time, miraculous. But free trade—the extinction of the protective principle—the repeal of the differential duties—would at once convert all our Colonies, in a commercial sense, into as many independent States. The colonial consumer of British productions would then be released from his part of the compact—that of dealing, in preference, with the British producer; and the British consumer of such articles as the Colonies produce, absolved from his; each party would be free to buy in the cheapest, and sell in the dearest market. I defy any hon. Member opposite to say, that this would not be a virtual dissolution of the colonial system. The British flag might still fly for a time, where sound British policy had raised it, in every part of the world. The colonists would regard it still with the veneration to which it is entitled. Our navies might still guard their coasts and waters, and our troops hold military possession of their lands; but then would come the question of the economists, in debates on the Navy, Army, and Ordnance Estimates, what is the use of Colonies? They consume not, as of old, the productions of the United Kingdom in any greater degree than if they were Foreign States; we no longer consider and treat the Colonies as domestic sources essential for the supply of the materials of our manufacturing in-

* Despatch, No. 8, 1st Feb. 1828.

dustry, and the elements of our maritime power; and it will be difficult to answer that economical argument, when, moreover, we shall have discarded our Colonies, for considerations of a wretched pecuniary economy, and sacrificed national objects, and high destinies, to the minor, and the comparatively mean, calculations of speculative wealth. I have said what the effect of free trade must be on the Canada Corn Bill. What will be the effect of the extinction of protection, when fully carried out, on the British North American timber trade? I am not speaking of the terms proposed in this new Tariff, but of the total abolition of all differential duties, which must be the result of this measure. When this is carried out with respect to sugars, what is to become of the British West Indies? How will they be affected by free trade in sugar? for the perfect extinction of protection must be carried out to the extent even of admitting slave-produced sugar, as already demanded, and as we have already done slave-produced cotton. What is to become of the coffees of Ceylon—and what of British India—that boundless space, in which, in the Valley of the Ganges alone, sugar sufficient for the supply of the whole world might be produced? And how have we treated British India? By the force of our manufacturing power, we have effectually destroyed their cotton manufacturing industry. The steam power of England has superseded the low rate of wages in India, triumphed over the workmen of that country; deprived them, by so much, of their means of subsistence; and whilst we have thus superseded their industry in manufacturing their own raw article, we, for many years, imposed heavy duties on it, and have recently again favoured the importation of that article from a foreign country, which takes not our manufactures in return. This is not free trade. In like manner the manufacturing industry of India in woollens, has been greatly injured. The difficulty now is, to find goods in India to be taken by us, in exchange for what she wants. But if the resources of India, and her capacities to consume British goods, were properly cultivated and developed, it would be enormous; but this cannot be, by the extinction of the protective principle. That the manufactures of India should have fallen into decay, was inevitable; the dear goods of India could not compete with the cheaper and better productions of England; this has necessarily converted the manufacturing industry of the Hindoo, into that of the agriculturist. But this imposes upon us the obligation, of protecting that industry. The whole amount of manufactures exported to India does not at present exceed 8,000,000*l.* (in 1844, 7,695,666*l.* including Ceylon). If we were to encourage as we might the natural productions of British India, to enable her the better to pay for British goods, there is scarcely any assignable limit to the increase of that vast market of consumption for the productions of British industry. The demands for British cotton goods alone, if the population took but at the rate of 2*d.* per head, would amount to 50,000,000*l.* sterling; and the demand for woollens, silks, pottery, glass, plated wares, cutlery, iron, brass and copper implements, and an infinity of articles for domestic use, would be prodigiously increased. I fear, Sir, I have trespassed at unreasonable length on the indulgence of the House—indulgence which I have often experienced, and never more required than on this occasion, on which I could not give a silent vote. But before I sit down I request permission of the House to read a few extracts from the speeches of Mr. Huskisson, for the purpose of showing how incorrectly he has either been read or represented, by those, who cite him as favourable to perfect free trade, and to withdrawing protection from agriculture and from the Colonies. Previous to the year 1825, the colonial trade remained in a state of very considerable monopoly. The Acts of 1826 opened the commerce of the Colonies to all friendly States—free intercourse between them and Foreign States, either in British ships or theirs—allowing them to import all articles the growth, produce, or manufacture of the foreign country to which the ship belonged, and to export from such Colonies all articles the growth, produce, or manufacture either to the country from which the foreign vessel came, or to any other part of the world except the United Kingdom—but all intercourse between the mother country and the Colonies, direct or circuitous, was reserved strictly as a coasting trade. But British productions were protected in the colonial markets, by duties varying from $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 30 per cent. Thus, Mr. Huskisson's policy approximated to free trade between the Colonies; but retained an efficient protection of the colonial trade. Thus he provided considerable revenue duties for the Colonies, under Imperial Acts of Parliament, without violating the Declaratory Act of the 18th George III., by paying over the gross

proceeds to be appropriated by the local Legislatures. These protecting duties have been greatly reduced by subsequent Acts of the Imperial Parliament; differential duties greatly relaxed, the colonial Legislatures prohibited from making any discrimination on importations whether from Foreign States, British possessions, or the United Kingdom. Hence revenue necessities compel the local Legislatures to impose duties on the productions and manufactures of the United Kingdom, equally with foreign productions, and even on the productions of each other. The Canadas impose a duty of 6 per cent. on the productions and manufactures of the United Kingdom; Nova Scotia 4 or 5 per cent.; New Brunswick the like. Whilst we have been taking off the duties on foreign timber, New Brunswick, for a revenue necessity, has imposed an export duty: so in Mauritius there is an export duty on sugar. The British North American provinces, as a class, impose duties on the productions of their sister Colonies in the west—the British West Indies; whilst these, as a class, are supplied by the United States of America, free, or at trifling duties—with just such articles as those in which British North America abounds; but which are by so much shut out from the markets of the British West Indies. Not only did Huskisson make stringent the principle of a protection, but he moreover intended seriously to retaliate, by imposing countervailing duties, unless the United States altered their Tariff of 1824. In the debate of May, 1825, (I think on Bonded Corn,) Mr. Huskisson said—

"Do not let us be in a hurry; let us look at all the bearings of the case. We are willing to throw open the trade of our Colonies to the United States, provided they meet fairly the propositions held out in our Acts. But if after such deliberation it were deemed necessary, or we should be forced, to retaliate, he would enjoin the House to adhere to it with firmness."

And Canning practised in 1826 what Huskisson menaced, which obliged the United States to reduce their Tariff. The first extract I shall, with the permission of the House, read, is that in which Mr. Huskisson avows his opinion and policy with respect to free trade generally. In the debate of the 8th April, 1826, he said—

"Before I sit down, Sir, I must say, that some of the doctrines of my hon. Friend on the subject of our trade are not quite just or well founded. At least, they are not doctrines which I have ever entertained; certainly, they are very different from those which I have expressed in this House, and they are equally distinct from the principles upon which His Majesty's Government have been guided in their recent measures with reference to our foreign policy. My hon. Friend has argued the question of free trade, as if it were the absolute removal of all restrictions thrown in the way of the supply of foreign productions to the people of this country. Now, Sir, this is not my view of the question."

The next extract I shall ask the House to let me read, is that on agricultural protection. It has been partially quoted, but I entreat the attention of the House to the whole passage:—

"The history of this country," says Huskisson, in his letter to his constituents at Chichester, "proves that cheapness produced by foreign import is the sure forerunner of scarcity; and a steady home supply is the only safe foundation of steady moderate prices. During upwards of one hundred years to 1765, when the import of foreign corn was restrained by very high duties, our own growth of corn was ample for our own consumption in ordinary seasons, redundant in abundant seasons, and in bad seasons occasioned no apprehension of, or actual want. The price of corn seldom varied more than a few shillings per quarter; if there was no inordinate gain to the farmer, there was no starvation to the consumer; prices, instead of rising from year to year, gradually diminished: whereas since 1765, the supply has been unsteady and precarious, our dependence on foreign supplies gradually increasing till the war came, when, by the foreign supply being interrupted, the country became dependent on its rivals and its enemies for the food of its people. In the first eighteen years of this war, we were forced to pay sixty millions of money to nations every one of which has in the course of that war been our enemy, for a scanty and inadequate supply of foreign corn; and when, for this purpose, we parted with all our gold and even our silver currency, combined Europe shut its ports against us, and America co-operating, first laid an embargo, and then went to war. Shall I then," continued Huskisson, "be deterred from using my honest endeavours in Parliament to prevent the recurrence of such sufferings? I admit that if unlimited foreign import, which the war had suspended, were now again allowed, bread might be a little, though a very little, cheaper than it now is, for a year or two; but what would follow? The small farmers would be ruined; improvement would stand still; inferior lands now producing corn would return to a state of waste; the home consumption and brisk demands for all the various articles of the retail dealer would rapidly decline, to the great injury of our towns, especially those which are not connected with manufactures or commerce; farming servants, and all the trades which depend on agriculture, would be thrown out of work, and wages would fall even more rapidly than the price of corn. The great farmers and large capitalists might for a time bear up against foreign import, and, should they do so, will command extravagant prices to repay themselves; but in the mean time, the poorer, but not less industrious, small farmers, will have been ruined. To protect the small farmers is ultimately to protect the people."

Lastly, Sir, I appeal to as splendid a passage as can be quoted from the speeches of any British statesman:—

"It is the first and paramount law of every State to provide for its own safety and defence; we will never listen to a theory which, by withdrawing protection from the colonial trade, would render insecure those possessions on which essentially depends the power of Great Britain, to retain that high station in the rank of nations which she owes to her commercial and colonial ascendancy; and least of all shall we listen to the representation of States which evince boundless jealousy of our navigation in peace, and of our maritime ascendancy in case of war; and who tell us distinctly, that they are steadily looking to the ulterior object, of one day disputing with us the dominion of the seas."

And now, Sir, in conclusion: fervently do I hope, that, if this measure pass, the intentions and expectations of my right hon. Friend, honestly and faithfully devoted to the best of his judgment, to promote the real interest of his country, by this extensive measure, may be realized to the fullest extent: sincerely do I wish that my opinions may prove to have been erroneous, and my apprehensions groundless. But, under a strong conviction that such will not be the workings of this measure; believing that the value of British industry will be depressed; that the physical and social condition of the people will not be raised; that British agriculture will be checked and injured; and that consequently manufactures, commerce, and navigation, will suffer, and the great pillars of our maritime supremacy, and the elements of our naval power subverted;—I give a willing confident, conscientious, and consistent vote, however painful and reluctant in some respects, against this perilous and, as it appears to me, unnecessary experiment—an experiment from which there is no retreat; a movement in which there is no receding; an experiment, the success of which can scarcely add to the general well-being, the prosperity, the greatness and the glory of this country; but any failure in which must prove ruinous to Imperial Britain.

Viscount VILLIERS regretted that, in voting on the present occasion with the Government, he should differ from many of those friends with whom in political connexions he had so long been associated. In the course he was taking, however, he was actuated only by a desire to see such a policy adopted as would most speedily conduce to the general welfare of the community. When recently the consideration of the subject had been brought before the House, he had confessed himself in favour of protection; but it had been in favour of a protection which should be placed upon such a basis as would give no partiality, would enable capital to flow in its legitimate channels, and effect those improvements in agricultural processes which, on all hands, were allowed to be so desirable. But he now wished to ask any Gentleman in the House, whether it could be pretended that protection was placed upon those terms? Were not all aware that the existing protection must always be the object of contention and the cause of mischief? Nor could he now seek, conscientiously, to maintain the assertion that such a state of things was favourable to those for whom protection was demanded, either to the farmer or to the agricultural labourer. He felt himself also bound to say that, whatever opinions he had entertained, the experience of the last three or four years had made him acquainted with facts beyond controversy or denial. One fact was, that the reductions of the duties on agricultural produce had not produced low prices; and a second fact was, that a reduction in other duties did not imply any falling-off in the revenue of the country. The result had been the reverse; for, by such a policy, the nation, from a gloomy and depressed state, had, in five years, recovered, nay, added to all its former prosperity, and in proportion to the reduction of duties, it had been found, was the increase in the revenue. With these considerations before his eyes—with the knowledge of what had happened—and with the anticipations, derived from that experience of what was to come from a further development of the like legislation—was he justified in risking the welfare of the people on the issue of a struggle entered into in the hope of maintaining agricultural protection? He considered that he was best discharging his duty, and best defending his own consistency, in doing what he believed best—by voting with the Government; and he trusted that from the final settlement of the question now about to take place, the whole Empire and the whole world would derive advantage.

Mr. F. SCOTT said, that when the measure was brought forward ten days ago, he came down to the House in the hope that he should be able to afford it a cordial support. Whenever he had addressed the House, he had always most readily given his voice and vote in support of the measures of the right hon. Baronet, and he need not now state the pain and regret with which he took an opposite course. He felt that his previous course of conduct,

both in the country and in the House, although he had given no distinct pledges, had been such as to induce the House to believe that the course which he would take in this year, 1846, would be that which he had taken in the year 1837, when as an unsuccessful candidate he addressed a large and independent constituency, composed of both agriculturists and manufacturers; and again, in 1841, when, with more success, he addressed them and obtained their support. Upon later occasions he had maintained the same course, both from conviction, and from a feeling that he could not act more safely than follow the right hon. Baronet, whose opinions, from his youth upwards, he had observed with respect. With these feelings of what was of importance to the country, and with these feelings of respect and admiration for the right hon. Baronet, what must be the stunning effect of the suddenness with which he had turned round upon all his former opinions, deserting those who placed him upon that bench. He regretted to say that he had felt it his conscientious duty to change his course, to hoist another flag, and to trade under different colours. He felt that it was not necessary for him to deliberate as to what his course should be; he felt that, although he was miserable in comparison to the right hon. Baronet, as to intelligence and as to sagacity, yet that no man was to be the guide of what was his moral duty; and when he stated that he acted from his own convictions, the right hon. Baronet would give him credit for sincerity. He felt, likewise, that it was impossible for him in three days, or even three weeks, to take such a retrospect of three years, as to induce him to efface from his memory all that had passed, all that he had observed, and all that he had read during thirty years. He should not enter into *Hansard*, that thick jungle of disappointed promises and violated pledges. He would suppose a case. A gentleman of his acquaintance was possessed of a large estate, say, in the south of England; he had also large possessions in Scotland, and, withal, was largely engaged in a manufacturing business. He had very extensive dealings with a mercantile house on the Continent, and with that house he had a dispute; they claimed, inasmuch as they had already shared largely in the profits of the dealing, that they should become partners in the house in this country; but the plea was considered altogether untenable. The question was to be argued in the country court, before a common jury; it was to be further argued in Westminster, before a special jury; and finally, it was to have a hearing in the House of Lords. The gentleman went on a visit to his estate in the south, where, possibly, he found it not so well managed, but still prosperous; he then proceeded to his possessions in Scotland, where he found them better cultivated, and still more prosperous; he also visited his manufactories, and found them in a state of great prosperity. The case was set down for a special hearing, which brought him up to town. On his arrival, he found, to his surprise, that the leading counsel who had been retained to conduct his case had, during his absence, returned the brief; but, on going into court, and seeing that same leading counsel pleading the cause of his opponent, his surprise knew no bounds, and he very naturally said, "God bless me! what does this mean? You are mistaken; you were retained for me, and were to lead on my side." But when the counsel said, "Oh, no, no mistake at all; I was engaged on your side, but I cannot argue it, I find it a rotten case, and I advise you to give it up. I have deliberated upon it during your absence; I have looked into the state of the case as regards the food of the people, and I find that a great part of the potatoes are rotten, therefore I could maintain your case no longer, and now counsel you to abandon it at once." He goes to the junior counsel, and they said, "We shall follow our leader. And, after all, it is but a mere fiscal regulation. What are you making this fuss about? You may consider it of vast importance, but we do not consider it of any importance, and you may, therefore, make the best you can of the affair; but we shall not advocate it any longer." This, perhaps, was trifling; and perhaps he owed an apology to the House for it. He should not ransack *Hansard* for the purpose of bringing forward charges of inconsistency against public men; but he should take the opinions uttered during the last three weeks on this subject by men of the greatest talent in the country, for the purpose of showing the shifts to which they were driven in order to justify a measure brought forward without necessity, and unsupported by reason. On the 27th of January, the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government spoke of the increased comfort and contentment that resulted from the relaxation that took place in 1842; the right hon. the Secre-

tary at War, in the following week, stated that the Corn Law of 1842 was a signal failure. The right hon. the Secretary of State for the Home Department, at half-past ten o'clock on the evening of the 10th of February—

Mr. E. BULLER rose to order. He thought it was an understood rule of the House that no Member was at liberty to refer to the speech of another hon. Member on a preceding night's debate.

Mr. SCOTT resumed. He should be sorry to contravene the rules of the House; but if he were out of order the right hon. Gentleman in the Chair would set him right. At half-past ten at night on the 10th of February, the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) asked, "whether any Minister of the Crown could in fairness propose to the people of Great Britain to take out of the taxes of Great Britain public money to aid in the sustenance of their fellow countrymen in Ireland, while artificially, by laws so designed, the price of the food of the people of Great Britain was enhanced?" The same right hon. Baronet, the same night, at ten o'clock, said, "I do not believe that the abolition of protection will materially lower the price of corn." On the 22nd of January, the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) gave up the defence of the Corn Laws as no longer tenable. On the 27th of January, five days after, in replying to the noble Lord the Member for Lincolnshire, he stated that he was not prepared to assume that there would be any fall in the price of corn by the abolition of protection. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War, on the 9th of February, confirmed this statement by declaring that the claptrap of cheap bread had completely exploded. "I tear up these documents," said the hon. Member, suiting the action to the word, "for what could be deduced from this series of contradictions?" It merely showed the great difficulty in which public men were placed, when they adopted what he would not call a crooked course, but a tortuous line of policy. He considered that, of all things, character in public men was that which was of most importance. Changes of policy might be necessary; but they should always be made in accordance with the times, and they must depend, too, upon the men, and the mode, and the manner in which the changes were made; for, if they were made by some men, and in some manner, they might lead to the most ruinous and disastrous consequences. In 1842, he had supported most cordially the measure of the right hon. Baronet. There was great anxiety throughout the country at that time as to the result of that measure—["Hear, hear,"]—not only in the county represented by the hon. Member who had cheered, but in the county which he had the honour to represent, and he had done all he could to alleviate the alarm. He had satisfied himself that there was not such great cause for alarm, and he had given his cordial support to the measure of the right hon. Baronet. If the measure now brought forward in 1846 had been in accordance with that of 1842, as well as with the Speech from the Throne, and with the declaration made by the right hon. Baronet, that his measure would not injuriously affect agricultural interests—that it would afford adequate protection to those interests, and deal tenderly with them, he should have again supported him. The present measure was a wide one; but he doubted whether it was as wise as it was wide. There was this difference between the measures of 1842 and 1846: both were reductions of duty, both were removals of restrictions, and both were repeals of prohibitions—with this difference, that in 1842 the reductions and remissions were made upon articles of raw produce, productions of other lands and climes; whereas the reductions now were upon articles ready manufactured—articles which were also manufactured in this very country, and which therefore came into immediate competition with the industry of this land. He had always felt that it was right to take away restrictions upon articles of public consumption, that they ought not to desire to acquire the title of encouragers of monopoly or class legislation—benefiting one interest at the expense of another. Entertaining this opinion, it appeared to him that the amount of the tax upon foreign grain, the food of the people, ought to be merely so much as would give the greatest encouragement to the growth of grain to the greatest extent in this country. Living as he did in a country where the cultivation of grain was as well understood as in any part of the Empire, and that during the last ten years improvements had been made, notwithstanding the low prices, and especially during the last two years—notwithstanding, he repeated, the low prices which had prevailed, notwithstanding the distance of lime and manure, and notwithstanding hilly roads; notwithstanding this, not only had prices continued remunerative, but, during the last twenty

years, rents had advanced—he gave hon. Gentlemen the benefit of that fact—and, notwithstanding this, wages had continued high, and remunerative employment had been afforded to labourers; so he had felt prepared to go with the right hon. Baronet in reducing the amount of the existing protection to agriculture. He felt, that in consequence of the improvements which had been made in the cultivation of the soil, in consequence of the facilities of access to markets, in consequence of the improvements in husbandry, and the application of science and chymistry, the expense of farming would be so much reduced that grain might be raised at a cheaper rate. Entertaining these opinions, and considering that the only object of protection was to cause an increased amount of grain to be grown in this country—[Sir R. PEEL: For whom are you counsel?] "If the right hon. Baronet has any question to put to me, I am ready to answer it. I am the advocate of my own opinions—I am no delegate—I am free to speak my own sentiments—I am counsel for no man—for no party—for no sect. I follow no party—no leader of a party. I did belong to a party, the party of the Constitution—the party of the right hon. Baronet; I served under his banner, and I would continue to serve under his banner now, if he continued to hoist it. But I speak too warmly; perhaps I misunderstood the question; I understood the right hon. Baronet to put it to me whether I was a retained advocate. [Sir R. PEEL: No, no.] I am not. I admit that the illustration I used in a preceding part of my speech may have suggested the question." He was going to say (the hon. Member continued), that his feeling was, that agriculture was to be protected only for the benefit of the consumers. He had hoped that the right hon. Baronet would have introduced a measure which would not have afforded to the foreigner such an advantage as the present did, and which threatened ruin, he feared, to the cultivators of this country. How opposite to what he (Mr. Scott) had expected was the measure of the right hon. Baronet, one which would most assuredly inflict "a heavy blow and great discouragement" upon agriculture; one which would drive money out of the country to purchase foreign grain, and which must assuredly increase seriously the fluctuations in prices, tend to diminish the food of the population, and grievously affect, at all events for a time, the labouring class. As to the first, he had the high authority of Lord Melbourne and Mr. Van Buren, who had spoken of this subject in terms which must be too deeply impressed upon the minds of those who heard him to render it necessary for him to refer to them. As to the tendency of the measure to diminish the necessaries of life, he would refer to the words of the hon. Member for Bolton in 1842. He said—

"The command over the necessaries of life is smaller in foreign countries than in England. The consumption of sugar in France is 5 lb. per head, in the German League 2 lb. per head, and in England 17 lb. per head. The consumption of woollen cloth throughout the German League, was 2 1-6 ells per head, and in England 54."

Baron Du Pin said the Frenchman would have to give four days' labour for the quantity of meat that the Englishman could obtain for three days' labour; and the bread that would require eight days' labour on the part of the Frenchman, the Englishman could purchase for seven days' labour. With respect to the amount of money that would be driven out of the country by the adoption of this measure, some idea might be formed from what had fallen from the hon. Member for Liverpool, who said that 30,000,000*l.* had left this country to purchase food during the war. But the fluctuation in price was the most material subject, and one which would be found to affect this country most grievously. During twenty-five years' peace, in no country, save Sweden, was the price of grain so steady as in Great Britain. In times of war, two-thirds of the countries represented in the book of tables of the Board of Trade, experienced greater fluctuations than Great Britain. He need not refer to a higher authority than that of the noble Lord the Member for London, as to the immediate suffering which would be consequent on passing this measure. The right hon. Baronet had alluded to a Gentleman on that (the Ministerial) side of the House, as being in a ferment on a measure for mere Customs regulation—on a mere fiscal affair. Why, it was little more than a mere fiscal affair that lost us the United States. He (Mr. Scott) knew not what could be more important than this measure—in fact, he considered it no less than a serious breach in the Constitution. The right hon. Baronet admitted that he had become a convert to the doctrine of free trade in the abstract. The noble Duke, in the other House, said he should be glad to know what any person meant by a free-trade Government? He should like to

ask the same question. He understood very well what was meant by free trade in the abstract. That was perfectly intelligible. All travellers from the time of Mentor and Telemachus down to the present day were in favour of free trade in the abstract. He was in favour of free trade in the abstract. But he was not for applying that principle to this country alone while a different principle was acted upon all over the globe. The trade of this country was in such a complex and artificial state, that he would defy any man to introduce absolute free trade here with success. Free trade meant the abolition of all Customs' duties—of all duties on imports and exports. Would the nation then abandon all those duties? Were we prepared to give up 22,000,000*l.* per annum of taxes, and 13,000,000*l.* of excise to carry out free-trade principles? How was the interest on the national debt to be paid if those 33,000,000*l.* were to be given up? Could that amount be replaced by direct taxation? Could it be done by a capitation tax, or by a property tax? By what means could that amount of taxation be levied? To talk, then, of absolute free trade as applicable to this country, was nothing else than nonsense. In making this statement, he did not wish to have it supposed he was in favour of high prohibitory duties. He was favourable to a removal of duties from the raw material, because he thought such removal would give a buoyancy to commerce, and increase the revenue. But it was absolutely impossible to adopt free trade in this country, burdened as it was with an amount of debt not less than 800,000,000*l.*, to pay the interest of which it required 30,000,000*l.* of taxation. How could this country, with such a burden on it, enter into competition with foreigners? As well might you expect a man with one hundred weight on his back to enter the lists with a man carrying no weight whatever. But this was not the only important part of the question. The maintenance of the public faith was of the greatest importance. It should be remembered, too, that we had an extensive colonial empire. How were we to maintain our engagements with our Colonies consistently with the policy of the right hon. Gentleman? Mr. M'Culloch said, our intercourse with the Colonies ought to be conducted on the principle of the coasting trade. Far otherwise was the policy of Her Majesty's Government. They were for levying taxes on the produce of our Colonies, while they admitted foreign productions duty free. The agriculturist in this country was told that he was not deserving of protection. Would the Government say the same to the Colonies? He would call upon honourable Gentlemen to consider the hazard of causing a dismemberment of our colonial empire, when we had established nearly fifty Colonies in every part of the globe. He must admit that those Colonies engaged very little of the attention of that House. There never was an allusion made to them in Speeches from the Throne. Bills relating to their Colonies met with less attention than those relating to their canals. They had nearly fifty settlements, with an extent of surface of 2,000,000 square miles, and a population of more than 100,000,000; and were those interests, he asked, to be gambled with in a measure like the present? Then, with regard to the maintenance of those Colonies, it was stated, in Mr. Montgomery Martin's work, that 456,000 troops, of whom 56,000 were Europeans, were required for that purpose. They required besides a large and increasing naval armament, and a civil establishment costing 2,000,000*l.*, and in the face of those facts it was dangerous to do anything which might alienate their feelings with regard to this country, or the feelings of the mother country with regard to them. You continue your protection on sugar, on coffee, on rum, and on various articles of colonial produce, and yet you tell the home producer that it is for his interest that he should not be protected. If we imposed on the English grower in this country a disadvantage when he came to sell, surely he should not also be met with a disadvantage when he came to buy. We ought not, when he came to dispose of his grain, to tell him that he should sell it at the lowest possible price, but when he required to buy, that he should buy at the highest. Would it not be, then, unfair to meet his purchases with a high duty? And this was practically done by reducing the value of the produce he offered for sale. But the matter should not be confined to England—the subject regarded the Colonies also. As to the Englishman, when he came to buy his sugar, for the pound you make him pay 5*d.* instead of 2½*d.*; for coffee 9*d.* instead of 3*d.*; and also for colonial spirits 20*s.* instead of 5*s.* the gallon. It was true the whole of this was not to be looked upon as a protection duty, but still it was a duty which was paid by the poor man. Look, then, at the feelings which that would create in the breast of English-

men, as regarded the Colonies. Then they would begin to think of the impropriety of protecting colonial produce, when you did not protect them, while at the same time they were made to pay for colonial protection. But then there was another consideration: the Colonists would say, "Why, when you admit the corn of foreign countries free, why should you tax our produce? You may say you do it for the purpose of raising the revenue; but that is contrary to the principles of free trade: you have no right to deny us a free entrance to our produce into your ports, when you admit the produce of foreign countries free. If we are to have justice, let it be even-handed." Such would be, and justly, the argument of the colonist, and a very proper argument to those who would come with the profession of free trade on their lips, but who had not the principles of free trade in their hearts—who would come with the profession of a policy totally inconsistent—a policy not only inconsistent, but which, if persevered in by the present Government, must eventually lead to the dismemberment of the Empire. The question had been asked of him, whose counsel was he? His reply was, that he was an independent Member of that House. He was not counsel for the manufacturing interest—he was not counsel for the mercantile interest—nor exclusively for the agricultural interest; but he was sent there to represent the interests of Great Britain. Much had been said about free trade. He admitted that the abstract theory of free trade was an admirable theory. He admired it as he would a cobweb, which in the morn sparkled with dew-drops in the sun. Some thought he had been premature in criticising the measures which the right hon. Baronet had introduced; and in having pronounced his declaration that it was impossible to support the present measure; but the more he considered the subject, the more he was convinced of its dangerous consequences, both as affecting their own immediate interests, and the interests of the Colonies. The measure, he had no hesitation in saying, was one of hazard and alarm, which would shake the social relations of the country to their foundation; and, however dangerous and oppressive to the country, it would be ruinous to the character of public men. His firm opinion was, that the measure would lead to hazardous results in our colonial possessions: it was well calculated to excite disaffection, particularly at a time when they were likely to be engaged in a hazardous strife with a warlike nation; to say the least, it was unfortunate to enter at that time upon the consideration of a question which would affect our colonial interests. Her Majesty, in Her Speech from the Throne, referred to what was at present a great question between England and the United States, the possession of the north-west coast. He would then ask—was this a time to enter upon a question which might render the solution of that problem more difficult? He would call the attention of the House to an extract from a paper drawn up by Mr. Isaac Buchanan, President of the Board of Trade in Canada, and Member for Toronto—a paper which excited the most anxious attention. Mr. Buchanan says—

"Take, for instance, the case of Canada. Can any one for a moment doubt that, as soon as it is known on the other side of the Atlantic, that Canadian wheat has no longer any protection in England, the Canadians will at once insist on the repeal of Mr. Gladstone's Act, which gives protection in the Colonies to British manufactures? Nine-tenths of the Canada trade will thereupon go to the markets of New York and Boston. The overburthened people of England will in their turn begin to feel that they are going to the expense of defending a Colony which has ceased to be of any use to the Empire, as consuming its manufactures, or employing its sailors and shipping. And any hint from England of a desire for separation will be cheerfully responded to by the people of Canada, who will be writhing under the feeling that England has dishonourably broken the promises of protection to Canadian wheat and timber made by every Ministry from the timber panic of 1808 downwards, and will have got their eyes open to the fact that, as there remains no longer any, the slightest, bond of interest between Canada and the mother country, no reason can be given why the Canadians should risk their lives and properties in defending nothing; or should allow Canada to be any longer used as the battle-field of monarchy and republicanism, or of European and American squabbles. The Canadians will moreover see, that as their wheat is practically excluded from the English markets, their only chance is to get it introduced into the markets of the United States. That republic, however, will not have free trade with Canada, and a political connection will have to be consummated between them to give Canada the American protection of 8*s*. sterling per quarter against British or other European corn. Whether, therefore, England wishes it or not, Canada will certainly out her connection immediately. The Canadians, by joining the United States, will continue to enjoy all the English privileges which England's Colonies enjoy under a free trade system, and, into the bargain, secure a better market for their wheat than than of England; for instead of removing their protection to native wheat of 8*s*. sterling per quarter, the Americans will be prepared to increase the duty if found insufficient by their great western interest. America will be the more ready to do this when the result is shown, that English free trade will reduce the Liverpool below the New York grain market; our

wheat being drawn from countries where there is no credit or banking system to inflate the price above the specie standard, for England will get little or no grain in return for her manufactures, although the free traders delude the public with asserting that she will. In losing the British American Colonies England will lose employment for 30,000 sailors, and the finest naval nursery in the world, the amount of tonnage in the trade being greater than that of the trade to all India and China. But it is not a simple loss to England; the command of the St. Lawrence will give a gain to America equal in extent to our loss, thereby trebling her naval power, while it leaves her with no rival or enemy in the north."

He called attention to this testimony, because he knew that it had had much influence on the minds of those who felt deeply for their colonial interests. Now, if one result of this system of legislation were the loss of Canada, for instance, did any hon. Gentleman suppose that our loss would stop there? It appeared that there was a large party in that Colony ready "at a hint" to separate from the mother country; and it was not likely that the many loyal inhabitants would be disposed to stand by us after we had abandoned them. The West Indies would soon follow their example, as well as the Australian Colonies, and all our extensive possessions in the eastern part of the world. Now, was the right hon. Baronet so much of the free trader that he was willing to abandon the whole of these vast and important Colonies? Though that right hon. Gentleman was a free trader "in the abstract," he (Mr. Scott) doubted if he were so much a free trader "in practice" as to adopt to that extent the principles promulgated by Mr. M'Gregor and Mr. M'Culloch, whom of late he had followed so closely. The noble Lord who was recently called to the Upper House—he alluded to Earl Grey—was a consistent politician in this matter: he was entirely for the abandonment of the Colonies, which he considered to be a great burden and charge to this country. If the right hon. Baronet were also of that opinion, let him avow it, but avow it in time. Don't let him go with his party up to a certain point, and then throw over the Colonies. In the summer of 1845 the right hon. Baronet opposed with success not only the measure of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. Villiers), but also the measure of the hon. Member for Gateshead, for the introduction of corn from a Colony sixteen thousand miles off; yet in six months afterwards the right hon. Gentleman himself proposed a measure which had for its object the introduction of corn into this country from places not 160 miles distant. But for what purpose was all this? It was to introduce the products of foreign Powers. Why, whenever we had lowered the duty on foreign produce, foreign Powers had always raised the duty upon ours. In 1837 and 1838 Prussia sent us one-half of the whole quantity of corn we imported, and in 1840 about one-third; whilst the exports of British manufactures to Prussia, in return, amounted to but a hundred and twenty-fifth part of the total exports from this country. Did the right hon. Baronet expect any reciprocity on the part of other countries? Did he anticipate that they would lower their duties on our manufactures? No such thing. On the contrary, he stated that he did not expect any immediate reciprocal benefit from Prussia in taking the duties off our goods. But he said, by diminishing protection we diminished the inducement to smuggling, encouraged lawful enterprise, and produced a considerable moral influence. The right hon. Gentleman also said that his object and expectations were by this measure to strengthen the bonds of amity with foreign Powers. But if he did not anticipate any reciprocity, or that our manufactures would be introduced into those countries by fair means, he wished to know by what means they would be admitted? Why, it could only be by carrying on a wide and comprehensive scheme of smuggling. That was the Prime Minister's avowed object. He happened to know that our exports to Gibraltar were to the extent of 1,200,000*l.* a year. Now, Gibraltar had a population, including its garrison, of not more than 4,000. What, then, became of all our goods? At gun-fire on a summer's morning, he had often seen boats steering under the batteries, and along the coast, and, despite the vigilance of the *guarda costás*, distributing our goods to the population on the shores. We were able to carry on the extensive contraband traffic in consequence of the weakness of the Peninsular Governments; but did the right hon. Baronet suppose that it would strengthen our influence with Continental Powers to introduce and extend such an immoral influence as he avowed it his desire to introduce? He held, therefore, that this measure of the Government, which was described as a stimulus to British industry, would prove, in fact, an irritating blister, creating a fever at home, and weakening the whole system of our commercial relations abroad. There was another point to which he would advert—

the manner in which the great interests of this country were dealt with. Capital may be invested to a large amount in a way which may be productive, but removable at pleasure, while capital may be invested and be irremovable; for instance, when sunk in land; but while the manufacturer was protected to the amount of 10 per cent., in common fairness the agricultural interest should at least be protected to a similar amount; but instead of that, there was the mockery of protection in the shape of compensation, which only added insult to injury. As to his own district, with which he was best acquainted, the tenants were intelligent and wealthy, and would not suffer as much as those tenants who resided on clayey lands, who, while equally honest and wealthy, but perhaps less intelligent, would be either swept off the face of the earth, or left to pine in misery. That would be the effect of the grand experiment which had been discovered within the last two or three years—that the bone-crushing experiment, which would drive multitudes of the honest and the industrious to beggary. While he was willing to give much credit to the right hon. Baronet for the success of many of his measures, he could not give him entire credit as regarded the prosperity of the country. There was an hon. Member lately introduced to the House, the Member for Sunderland, who, though not a Minister of the Crown, was the representative of a great system which contributed more to promote a prosperity for which the right hon. Baronet had taken some credit. That great system had circulated 23 millions of money throughout the country, and was the means to give employment to a vast number of the population; and it was a well-established fact that employment always diminished crime—so that those beneficial effects were attributable to the vast amount of money which was put into circulation in consequence of railway works. But the right hon. Baronet alluded to the success of late years, by comparing the tidal wave (the flood-tide) which had taken place since his accession to power with that of former years: in allusion to that fact, he stated that while the exports in 1842 were 47,000,000*l.* and wheat 52*s.*, in 1844 they were 58,000,000*l.* and wheat 53*s.* He would not, however, enter into a comparison with former years except in one instance, and that was the year 1837, when wheat was at 55*s.* 10*d.* the quarter, and the exports numbered 42,000,000*l.*; but in two years after, the exports were 53,000,000*l.*, showing an increase of 11,000,000*l.* between 1837 and 1839—and the price of wheat was 70*s.* 8*d.* He would not argue for wheat being 55*s.* a quarter; let it be as cheap as possible; but whatever its price, let it be of English produce; and he would also say, as regarded protection to agriculture, when the state of affairs would admit of a certain reduction, let it be extended, but to the produce of this country. It had been stated by a noble Lord last night, that the time was arrived to admit foreign corn, because the population outstripped the produce of the country; but so far from that being the case, it would be found that at the commencement of the present century, when the population was not half its present amount, 970 out of every 1,000 were fed on home-grown corn, and not more than thirty out of every 1,000 on foreign. And to take the last five years, or any series of years, it would be found that the production of the soil advanced with the increase of the population. Most cordially did he trust that the right hon. Baronet was right, and he (Mr. Scott) in the wrong. He was quite unable, however, at present, to bring himself to that conviction. He could not go with the right hon. Baronet at this sort of atmospheric railway speed in legislation, and in abandonment of all former declarations. He believed that the present measure would give an impetus to the spirit of revolution, and that it would be so considered by those foreign Powers with whom we might seek to strengthen the bonds of amity. The hon. Member for Finsbury, in speaking of this measure, said, that he valued less the abolition of the Corn Law on its own account, than as leading to ulterior results. And he was right. What reason was there that we should not next see a league against primogeniture, or against the Church? Why not a league against the Protestant succession? He lamented the measure of Her Majesty's Government on account of the consequences that would ensue from it, both at home and abroad, in our Colonies and among foreign Powers. He lamented it because of the effects it would be attended with in Ireland, and also because of the permanent, the irretrievable damage it would cause to the public character of our leading statesmen. An eminent individual once observed that the faults of public men had a double effect—they were committed not only against their own times, but against posterity; for when the evil consequences of their measures had

ceased, the consequence of their example still remained. On all these grounds he lamented the measure of the right hon. Gentleman, and felt himself bound by paramount considerations of duty to oppose it.

Mr. H. G. WARD said, the hon. Member who had just addressed the House was an exceedingly difficult man to follow. [*A laugh.*] "Oh, I don't mean difficult in your sense; but in another sense." The hon. Member had declared himself (Mr. Ward continued) counsel for the British Empire, and had taken the whole world within his wanderings; but for argument, one half of the hon. Member's speech might be safely left to dispose of the other. Not a single position had the hon. Gentleman taken up, which he had not effectually demolished in a subsequent sentence; not a single proposition had he announced which he had not contradicted five minutes afterwards. ["No!"] Why, had hon. Members attended to the speech? Had they marked, in the first place, the reproaches with which the hon. Gentleman had assailed the right hon. Baronet for errors, as the hon. Member had called them, which, up to a recent date, he had entirely concurred in? Did hon. Members who sat on the other side agree with the hon. Member in his approbation of the Canada Corn Bill? Why, last year that Bill was to be the inevitable destruction of British agriculture, yet the hon. Member had supported it. The hon. Member had supported every modification contained in the Tariff; and now he talked of the results, of the miserable wretched results, to the hardware and cutlery dealers, and other branches of British industry, of what he called the bone-crushing experiment of the last three years, which, up to the last three months, he had himself concurred in. The hon. Member said he did not contradict himself. Why, in one breath he said there was simply a question of degree in this matter of free trade; and in the next, he declared that free trade was a breach of the Constitution. And after that tedious comparison with which he favoured the House, between the right hon. Baronet and a Counsel retained for a party, what right had he to take offence when the term was retorted upon him, and the right hon. Baronet, with an eye to his inexplicable contradictions, asked him for what party he was engaged? The hon. Gentleman had talked of the devious course of the right hon. Baronet; but it appeared to him (Mr. Ward) that, for the last three years, the course of the Government had been remarkably direct; for no one could doubt the conclusion it would arrive at; and those who supported the measure of 1842 had no sort of right to turn round upon the right hon. Baronet, and complain of a result which they themselves had rendered inevitable. For what had they done in 1842? They had the Government. They were a great party. They had an unassailable majority in that House. They had the game in their own hands. They had appealed to the country in favour of Protection. They beat their opponents. But what then happened? What was the very first step? Why, they admitted the absolute necessity of concession to what the right hon. Baronet now called the voice of truth and reason; and with every concession made, the necessity for their concessions became apparent. It became a mere question of degree as to what point they should stop at. Recollect, too, how the minor interests had been treated in the Tariff. They had been sacrificed. It would not do now, when defeat was staring hon. Gentlemen opposite in the face— [Mr. Ferrand: No, no!] Why, what had the hon. Member done in the West Riding of Yorkshire after all? After the opening speech of the right hon. Baronet, it was notorious that some Gentlemen were found in that House foolish or liberal enough to subscribe their two or three thousand pounds, to contest the West Riding with the noble Lord who had just taken his seat. The hon. Member opposite went into the Riding, and he certainly succeeded in that which appeared to be his peculiar mission—exciting the most hostile feelings between master and workman, and between capital and labour; but his own friends, the Tory manufacturers in the Riding, were so frightened at the doctrines of the hon. Gentleman, that they refused to take part in the contest. [Mr. Ferrand: That is not true!] If that were intended as a personal contradiction, it was not exactly the language which ought to be used in that House. [Mr. Ferrand: No, no!] He had the best authority for what he said; but however that might be, hon. Gentlemen opposite found themselves now in this position, that they were denouncing, as absolute treachery on the part of the Government, a step which was the inevitable result of their own acts; and their own advocates were forced to admit that they only differed from the right hon. Baronet, because he went further than they wished. Even the hon. Member, who had just spoken, admitted that legislation must be progressive,

that the laws of England were not immutable; but then he would rather have them altered at the desire of the landlords, than at the demand of the public. The public had waited long enough for the landlords to move on, and it was now time for the people to have something to say in the matter. The hon. Gentleman said, a tax upon corn was liable to be called a tax on bread. How was it possible to make a distinction between them? He had said he would protect corn in moderation; but he had proved that protection was not called for by any bodies or interests which he professed to represent; for he said that in Scotland, where agriculture was well understood, protection was not valued—and that in spite of the hilly and barren soil, the want of roads, of manure, of markets, and of those other facilities which existed in other parts of the country—in spite of the demoralizing measures of the right hon. Baronet, cultivation was still profitably carried on. As to the trash which the hon. Member had quoted in relation to the Colonies, it needed no answer, nor would it be necessary to reply to the absurd circular of Mr. Buchanan; but he would ask how it was possible that we could incur the risk of nine-tenths of the Canada trade being taken from us and going to supply New York, seeing that we now supplied the markets of New York ourselves against all competitors? What amount of the English export trade went to the English Colonies? He did not believe that they took one-fourth of the whole exports of this country. Where were the rest consumed? In the neutral ports, where we had not any advantage, and not the slightest preference over our continental neighbours. He must next go back to the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Liverpool, who, he regretted to find, had left the House, though having made a very elaborate speech, he must have expected that some remarks would have been made upon what he had stated. The hon. and gallant Gentleman was peculiarly happy in his position, for he said that he had nothing to regret, and nothing to retract, since he had come into Parliament. Few Members in that House could make such a declaration. The town of Liverpool, however, was not so peculiarly happy in her Members at the present moment; for one, the noble Lord (Lord Sandon) found it utterly impossible to make his vote and his speech agree upon this occasion; and the other hon. and gallant Member had connected with the cause of the narrowest and blindest monopoly the greatest commercial town in the Empire. The hon. and gallant Gentleman wished for protection to all; he would give protection to all; and he would give it above all to labour, because it was exposed to the competition of capital at home; but he seemed not to see the reply to his doctrine, in the question—"What would labour do without capital?" They had heard of the competition of flesh and blood with machinery. That had been made the most of in the West Riding by the hon. Member for Knaresborough, who had some extraordinary notions upon this subject; but the working men now scouted such a doctrine—they outstripped their leaders, and went beyond them; but he (Mr. Ward) confessed that he was indeed surprised to hear an hon. Member for Liverpool complain of the competition between English labour and English capital, and ask Parliament to protect labour against capital. Then the hon. Member said that reciprocity was hopeless; that it was all very well to talk about free trade here, but that we could not communicate it to other countries. We had tried negotiations, and we had failed; was it not then advisable to try the effect of example? Had not our trade with France quintupled, notwithstanding the most rigorous and severe restrictions imposed upon our imports? Then, it was asked, what would become of our Colonies, and what would be the effect on British interests in India? The hon. and gallant Member himself admitted, that if the Indian cotton manufacture had been interfered with, the people of India were supplied with cottons from this country, better and cheaper than they could be procured at home; and yet he said that this measure would be the ruin of India. He asked also how the people on the banks of the Ganges could enter into competition with those of other favoured countries? What did the people of the Brazils inherit by way of advantage over those who inhabited the same clime, and had the assistance of British science and British capital? He always thought it had been assumed, during the discussions on the Slavery Emancipation Bill, that free labour was better and cheaper than slave labour. How was it, then, that India could not enter into competition with any other country? The hon. and gallant Gentleman then appealed to the opinions of Mr. Huskisson. No man entertained a greater respect for the name of Mr. Huskisson—no man had a warmer appreciation of the great services he had rendered to his

country—than himself; but Mr. Huskisson, like the right hon. Baronet opposite, was obliged during his long career often to make sacrifices to party requirements; and if an appeal were made to the opinions of Mr. Huskisson in 1825, it would be right that an appeal should also be made to his opinions towards the close of his career, when he was free from the trammels of party, and ventured to speak his real sentiments. What did he say towards the close? On the 25th of March, 1830, two years after his sliding-scale had been in operation, and he had seen its defects, he said—

"It was his unalterable conviction that we could not uphold the Corn Laws now in existence, together with the taxation, and increase the national prosperity, or preserve public contentment. That these laws could be repealed without affecting the landed interest, whilst the people would be relieved from their distress, he never had any doubt whatever."

It was easy to complain of bad faith and of the betrayal of constituencies; but the first thing a public man had to do, was to be right; and if he found that he was not right, he ought at once to return to what reason and experience showed to be most conducive to the real interests of the country. There was no question on which a public man had greater justification in exercising his right to change his opinion, than the Corn Laws. It had never been a party question. Many had lived to learn and to benefit by experience. Every day new lights and new facts broke in upon them, and warranted any man in changing his opinion. Mr. Huskisson had changed his opinion. The noble Lord the Member for the city of London had manfully come forward and declared, "What I did twenty years ago, when I was a young and inexperienced man, was erroneous, and I have seen good reason to change my opinions." He (Mr. Ward) himself admitted that the first vote he had given was with the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, in favour of the Corn Laws, and he had only altered his views since he had brought his mind to bear upon the subject, and since he had done what few, perhaps, did, looked honestly and fairly into the question, divested from all class, he would not say interests, for they had not so much effect upon an honest mind, but class prejudices and party ties, which were more difficult to shake off than considerations of personal interests. Men got hampered with party connexions, or they had made some hasty and ill-considered speech at a county meeting, and they thought it only consistent with their honour to adhere to their opinions, till the whole country was united against the obstinate and blundering pursuit of a policy, which was as ruinous to their own interests as it was to those of the Empire. In the course of this debate there had been delivered many very able speeches. A speech had been delivered by the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, which he (Mr. Ward) had cheered as loudly and heard as attentively as any of the hon. Gentlemen on the opposite benches. He had never listened to a speech which pleased him more in point of delivery, tone, and feeling, in fact in everything excepting only the principle upon which it was founded. And yet, take that speech for what it was worth, strip it of its glare and glitter, and what was it? Insignificant beyond the power of language to depict. From first to last it was a *petitio principii*—from beginning to end a begging of the question. The whole fabric of its argument was constructed upon the absurd assumption, that not only could they, by means of an Act of Parliament, protect one class of men without injuring another, but that they could, through the same magical instrumentality, make every member of the community richer, better, and happier than he was before; and all this without injuring any other created being. If there could be any pretext of common sense or reason for this assumption—if it were indeed true that by an Act of Parliament that House could make men richer, more prosperous, or happier than at present, without working evil to any one—all he could say was, that the Members of that House were the blindest of men, and of all mortals the most neglectful of their high and sacred duties, since instead of wasting night after night in irksome discussion, they had not long ago introduced some such enactment as would have relieved themselves of an infinity of trouble, and put the whole human race in the enjoyment of unbounded felicity. But he denied that there was the slightest foundation in truth for any such assumption. He differed *toto cœlo* from the hon. Member. He denied that such results could ever flow from the protective system. That system was intolerable and indefensible, unless it could be shown that it was capable of universal application. It would not do to say that beneficial results would be the consequence to a certain class, if the protective system were applied in a particular quarter.

Unless it was capable of universal adaptation, it was a nuisance. Small and minute interests must be attended to under that system, as well as great and important ones. If they applied the principle to great interests, they were bound to bring it down to the smallest branches of the most unimportant manufactures. If this could not be done, away with the protective system! It was an absolute nuisance to the community. And who was there would say this could be done? A great injustice had been done to the farming interest when protection was taken off tares and clover-seed, at least so some hon. Gentlemen opposite were heard to say (though, indeed, much work had not been made about the matter); but the farmers themselves appeared to be of a very different opinion; and if he was not very much mistaken, the hon. Baronet opposite (Sir John Tyrrell) was himself present at a meeting in Essex, at which the farmers declared it to be their opinion that the protective duty on seed was, in fact, anything at all but a measure of protection, for that there were ninety-nine farmers who were ready to purchase the seed, for one who was ready to grow it. Unless, therefore, they could adapt their protective system—and that too with equally beneficial effect—to every branch of commerce and agriculture, it was a mockery—a delusion. Their great principle was a great humbug—a specious high-sounding thing, which it was all very well to make eloquent speeches about, but which, in point of fact, could never be worked out, never carried into practical operation. A noble Friend of his—he did not know whether the privilege of calling him friend might still be accorded to him, but he once had the honour of calling him his friend—Lord Dacre, had, at a meeting which was recently held in Hertfordshire, ceded so much to free-trade principles as to advocate the introduction of a description of cattle-food for the benefit of certain feeders; but he (Mr. Ward) would wish to know how that could be done without injury to those who raised that same description of food in Ireland, Scotland, and the north of England? If the measure which the hon. Gentleman the Member for Winchester (Mr. B. Escott) had originated, had been carried, and if maize had been introduced into this country duty free, there would, as a necessary consequence, be a lessened demand for oats and barley; and the farmers of Scotland and of the fens of Lincolnshire would be the sufferers. All other interests might be benefited, but one would receive a great injury. The truth was, they could not work out the principle practically; and any attempt to do it would involve them in a labyrinth from which they would not be able to extricate themselves, even if hon. Members opposite had a Ministry of their own. Were they then to sacrifice to this principle the great interests connected with a large and cheap supply of food for this country? It was said, however, that we could not compete with foreigners, because we were so heavily taxed. This was a question which ought to be approached with peculiar delicacy by hon. Gentlemen opposite. For six years this had been constantly put forward as the reason for refusing a change; and he was now delighted to find, by the votes of another House, that a noble Lord had taken up the subject, and had adopted almost the exact words of his own rejected Motion. A corresponding notice he had given in that House, and for three years successively he had endeavoured to procure an inquiry. If the agricultural interests had any peculiar burdens, they ought to be ashamed if they could not prove them; yet for three years he had given them the opportunity, which they had declined. He had begged them to nominate their own Committee; he had told them that they might even have the hon. and gallant Member for Lincoln (Colonel Sibthorp) as their Chairman, if they so pleased; and that they might examine his witnesses, or he would examine theirs, so that they should arrive at a fair conclusion; but they had declined, and for the best of reasons. They had no case which they could prove before twelve intelligent men, and they would have nothing to do with it. [Sir J. TYRRELL: Hear, hear.] The hon. Baronet who cheered had not voted for it, and he well recollected the last time the subject was discussed the hon. Baronet did him the honour of sleeping through the whole of his speech in the gallery. There was not the least blame in that—it was the best use the hon. Gentleman could make of his time, for it was a very disagreeable subject; he did not know what to say, and so he thought it best to sleep through the whole of it. However, the party disagreed to the appointment of a Committee: they shuffled about, and as a great party they did not do themselves justice; there was much talking and bragging out of the House, but they did nothing in it; there never was a party that so shrunk

from a fair inquiry. [Sir J. TYRRELL: Hear, hear.] He supposed by that cheer there was some mystery behind, and that by the hon. Baronet the mystery would be cleared up. The hon. Baronet had at Chelmsford cleared away many mysteries. He had cleared up the mystery of the breaking up of the Cabinet, and had told his friends how all the Ministers voted; and if he could clear up the mystery that night, he trusted the opportunity would not be allowed to pass by. He had certainly assumed that as hon. Gentlemen never had proved their case or attempted it, so they never could. Were they, however, to shrink on grounds such as he had alluded to—grounds so contradictory and so inconsistent—from entertaining—and favourably entertaining he trusted the House would, and as the country had done—the propositions brought forward by Her Majesty's Government. He would give to those propositions his most cordial support as the salvation of the agricultural interest, because he believed the worst thing that could be done would be to leave those Gentlemen to themselves. Nothing could be more fatal than any attempt on their part to go without leading-strings. They never had known—they did not then know—their own interest. They had made the strangest mistakes whenever they had been enabled by courtesy or circumstances to try their hand in the Statute Book. He would not enter into details, but let them take the case of wool. [Mr. W. MILES: Hear.] Would the hon. Member meet him on that ground? [Mr. MILES: I will.] Well, if the hon. Member would meet him, he would state the case of wool. In 1817, he believed the agricultural interest, by way of raising the price of English wool, were induced to lay a duty of 6*d.* per pound on foreign wool. Would the hon. Member for Somerset deny, that at the end of five years from that time, the price of wool was lower in England than it had been for 200 years before? Would he deny, that when in 1825 the duty was lowered to 1*d.*, the price instantly rose? Would the hon. Member deny, that now that the duty on foreign wool was taken off altogether, and that during the last year alone sixty-nine millions of pounds of foreign wool had been imported, the price of wool here was as high as it had been since the beginning of the present century? How would he meet that case? He should say, that the hon. Gentleman and his Friends were saved by Mr. Huskisson and the right hon. Baronet from the consequences of their own blindness. The agricultural interests imagined that they could monopolize this branch of the market; but they now saw their mistake, and they at last found that their only remedy, their only source of safety, was to throw themselves into the arms of that monster of free trade, in their denunciations of which they were now so vehement. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire had declared that the repeal of the Corn Laws would destroy the tenants of the country. This might be the hon. Member's feeling, and it might be the feeling of many Gentlemen inside that House; but it was not the feeling of the tenant class in this country. That class viewed the quostion in a different light, and did not apprehend any frightful calamities as the consequence of the measure, provided only the landlords would discharge their duty towards them conscientiously, and meet them in a fair spirit. On the contrary, the tenants were most anxious that this question should be set at rest at once. They knew that they would not be able to do anything with their land until this question was settled; and they also knew that it could be only settled in one way. Hon. Gentlemen in "the agricultural interest," as the phrase went, might perhaps by a vexatious opposition delay the consummation of this great question for a few months—perhaps for twelve months; but in the long run they were sure to arrive at a final settlement of the Corn Laws, and that could be only effected by the total and unqualified abrogation of the protective duties. Let the tenants be met in a fair spirit by their landlords, and no evil consequences would be felt. Let the tillage of the land be put on a more rational and equitable basis—let the leases be remodelled, expunging the obsolete terms—and, above all, let not the tenants be obliged to support the game of their landlords (that was one of the burdens upon land), and all would eventually go on prosperously and smoothly. Two or three years of difficulty might perhaps have to be encountered; but had there been no difficulties during the existence of the protective system? Surely it must be admitted by all that difficulties numerous and distressing had resulted from the fluctuation of prices. In the years 1833 and 1835 the agricultural interests were in no very palmy condition. At those periods wheat was 39*s.* a quarter, notwithstanding that under the law of 1815, 80*s.* was promised to be in-

sured to the tenant. No doubt it was, as the Member for Northampton had pictured, a sad thing to remove a man from a spot of land to which he and his family were attached. To be sure it was. It was a hard thing for any man to sunder himself from old habits ; but was legislation to be carried on under the influence of this feeling ? Would they feel equally solicitous and equally tender about the shopkeeper ? It was the general good of the entire community that should be regarded. Eventually, however, it would be found that the farmer would, under the new system, be as prosperous as ever. Let a proper relation be established between landlord and tenant ; and let no tenant hold more land than he had capital to till, and stock it with, and all would be well. It was a false humanity to permit a feeling of sickly sentimentality of this kind to warp them in the consideration of a great national question, in which the best interests of the Empire were involved. Should not some feeling be evinced for the labouring man, three-fourths of whose yearly income, as had been calculated by the noble Lord the Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire, were absorbed in the purchase of food ? They should look to that man, and take care that they did him no injustice. And could any one who heard the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Wilts, the other night, when he said that on his own estates and in his own neighbourhood, whilst wheat was varying from 74*s.* to 40*s.*, in the last ten years, the wages he paid during that time—and they all knew that the right hon, Gentleman was a man of a kind and liberal heart —were but 8*s.* or 9*s.* ; could any one who heard that, say that the labourer did not suffer the most from the system of protection ? Talk of wages equalizing themselves to the price of provisions ! why, when they saw the labourer exposed to the keenest privations under the system of protection, could they turn round and invoke that House to continue those laws, not for the sake of the landlords, but for the sake of the labourers and the tenants ? He recollected a passage in the writings of a gentleman who wrote in language peculiarly expressive, in which he called all those fallacies in which public men were in the habit of indulging, " political lies ;" and he said that " there never was a lie yet, which was not brought, sooner or later, to Nature's bank for payment." So, too, was it with the lie respecting the protective system. You might " pass it on," as Mr. Carlyle termed it, from rank to rank, so long as you had to deal only with the rich and the powerful; but you come at last to the " dumb, lowest class, which, with spade and mattock on its shoulder, stands face to face with reality, and can pass the lie on no farther." The people now thoroughly understood the protective system; and that they were thoroughly sick of it was attested by the meetings which had been recently held in Wiltshire and elsewhere. The landed Gentlemen had one resource : let them take the path now opened to them ; let them look to the great development of the interests of this country, and the consequent increase of employment, as the only thing that would permanently improve the situation of all classes of the population; and when they had ascertained what was the right course to pursue, he hoped that no small or selfish interests would, upon calm consideration, have an influence on the great body of the English gentry now arrayed against these measures. It was a difficult task that they had undertaken, and he was sorry to see them committed to it; for never had an aristocracy stood higher than that of England in public estimation, and he should be grieved to see them forfeit one particle of their position. But when a class, however numerous, however powerful, raised themselves against the interests of a whole community, depend upon it it could not long command either the respect or the sympathy of the people. It was a question involving their personal interests: he said that with reference to himself, for every interest he had was in land; but he gave his support to the policy of his friends behind him, because he saw that it was the irresistible claim of justice. Already some of the brightest ornaments of that House had been driven from it by the honest admission of their altered convictions upon that subject, and others were upon the point of following their example. A noble Lord opposite had told them that his conviction was with them, though he did not think himself at liberty to act up to it. He felt sure, however, that the noble Lord would free himself from the trammels that embarrassed him, and would soon bring his vote and his opinions into unison. Could they honestly maintain a law which, as he thought, had been based upon false principles—upon grounds which they could not work out in detail when they came to try it, and which

was utterly at variance with the just demands of the country? He did not believe that they could. The hon. Member for Huntingdon had spoken of a compromise; he appeared to have in his mind some Ministry which was to qualify protection, and adjust this question by some new modification of the tax on food. Perhaps the hon. Member was himself to be a member of this *juste milieu* Government; but he assured the hon. Member that, so far as the sense of the country went, they thought that the only fault of this great scheme was, that it did not work out its principles far enough. There was no conceivable reason why the duty upon butter and cheese should be reduced one-half, and the duty upon corn taken off altogether; and as to any idea of a compromise, he could assure the hon. Gentleman that the attempt would only serve to protract the struggle, and involve all the interests connected with agriculture in inextricable confusion. There was a very small quantity of wheat now to come in, and delay would deprive them of the opportunity, which perhaps they might never have again, of admitting foreign corn without any check to the agricultural industry of the country. He sincerely trusted, therefore, that the majority with which the measure of the Government would be sanctioned in that House, might be large enough to insure to it such a reception elsewhere, as he was certain it would meet with from the country.

Mr. MILES rose as one of that class which, the hon. Gentleman who had just spoken had said, sat there to promote their own interests: he thought that expression harsh, for as he had always done full justice to the opinions of hon. Gentlemen opposite, and thought that they had acted from zealous but mistaken motives, for the good of their country, so did he expect the same consideration in return. This was a great question; and although the hon. Member said that the hon. Member for Roxburghshire had wandered over the world in this discussion, yet when the magnitude of the subject was considered, they could not, in his opinion, look too far afield, or meditate too much upon the injuries likely to be inflicted, not only upon our home produce, but also upon that of our Colonies, and of every place now dependent on us. This was not an agricultural debate, though it had a good deal merged into one; but it was a debate involving every question, and those interests that were most dear to the whole population of the country. Scarcely an interest was left untouched; and it would ill become hon. Members to take up this as an agricultural question, and to contend for what the hon. Member opposite had called their class interest; although he thought that the party opposed to the right hon. Baronet had the good wishes of the great body of the people of England with them. He knew not that the debate could have commenced better than with the speech of the hon. Baronet the Member for Liverpool, followed, as it was, by that of the hon. Member for Roxburghshire, because both touched upon a point of much vital importance, viz., the effect the proposed measures would have on the Colonies; and although they found that the hon. Member for Roxburghshire had supported the right hon. Baronet in his change of the Tariff in 1842, yet he was strenuously opposed to any further change; and, in his opinion, the longer this question was delayed, the longer time that might elapse before these minor interests which were affected were brought under discussion, the more would it appear necessary to oppose the measure as far as they were concerned. He thought the hon. Gentleman who had just spoken had put this question most fairly—that either protection must be defended as a principle, and as applicable to all classes; or if they abandoned it and took it away from one, then all protection must be withdrawn from every branch of our domestic industry. That was the best ground upon which this subject could be debated. The hon. Member for Huntingdon had talked of a compromise. This he (Mr. Miles) could never defend. He thought they must either stand precisely as they did, or must adopt the measure proposed by the right hon. Baronet or the hon. Gentlemen opposite. He conceived that the measures now proposed were brought forward against the experience of centuries; and he had now to ask whether the successful experiment of the short period of the last three years could be taken as an argument for the withdrawal of all protection, against the experience indeed of ages, during which this country had risen to a height of prosperity which no other country had ever yet attained. He would ask those hon. Gentlemen whether we were singular in the adoption of the principle of protection, or whether it was not of universal application? and whether it would not be an act of insanity to withdraw it, and to hope to maintain the artisan and labourer of this country in

direct competition with the foreigner? They had indeed but slender hopes that foreign countries would follow the example; since the effect of the Tariff of 1842 had caused several foreign States, instead of lowering, to increase their duties upon our produce. But he would ask them to look at the period at which this question was brought forward. Was it not one of most extraordinary prosperity? Look at the state of the public funds—of the labour market—of manufactures, and of the vast application of capital to commercial enterprise. These at once showed the immense prosperity of the present time, and he thought held up a warning to them not to tamper with their old commercial policy, but to leave well alone, and to be satisfied with that happiness which was now showered upon this country. What, then, was the reason why this measure was undertaken? It appeared to him extraordinary that an affection in one crop should have led to such a change in the minds of public men; for it seemed to him—and he had taken much trouble on the subject—that the fears about the potato crop had been very greatly exaggerated. He had done everything he could to procure returns, and had not been satisfied with his own individual research. But it would be in the recollection of the House that on the first night of the debate, when he thought reflections were cast upon the agricultural body by the noble Lord for not caring for the distress of the poor, he then told him, that, so far from it, very early in November a very large body of agriculturists, at a meeting in London, declared that if famine prevailed in Ireland, they were perfectly willing to throw open the ports. He thought, however, that that was too good an opportunity to lose to endeavour to obtain the very best statistical information in his power; and although he could not effect that in Ireland, he was enabled to do it in England, by means of those societies which were now established throughout the country in connexion with agriculture. Forms containing certain queries which it was advisable to have filled up were sent to each of these societies, and the consequence was that returns were made from twenty-six counties. These returns were signed, in many instances by the churchwardens and overseers of the parishes, and in other cases by individuals competent to supply the required information. Though the returns were not so fully given as they might be, still he was able from them to give such evidence as would dissipate all ideas and fears of a coming scarcity. He had only that morning seen a friend of his, from the county which he had the honour to represent — a large potato grower, who had called upon an extensive potato salesman in the city, as he wished to dispose of his stock. That gentleman found, to his (Mr. Miles's) delight, that potatoes were now decreasing in price, and the salesman told him that if he wished to sell them, he should do so now, for his conviction was that in spring they would be cheaper. That was a statement which he was sure the House would be pleased to hear, as being the opinion of an eminent potato merchant. He would now refer to the returns in the shortest possible manner, and confine himself to as few of the details as was consistent with a fair statement of the case, omitting all allusion to the articles of grass, hay, and clover. The return, he might state, had reference to a breadth of land extending to 1,292,000 acres, and in quoting from it he would confine himself to wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes. Relating to potatoes, his wish was that the information should have been as full as possible. Observations were demanded from each district as to the actual state of the potato crop; and, although the replies were of course various, some stating the loss to be one-third, some one-half, and others having a full crop; yet all concurred, that, though there was disease, the crop was large, in consequence of their having been a greater breadth of land planted with potatoes than usual; and that though this increased breadth planted, did not make up entirely for the failure, yet, that it did so in a great measure, and would much alleviate the pressure that must otherwise have fallen upon the lower classes. He found, that as to the wheat crop of this year, there was in favour of its being at or above an average crop, 3,092 returns. As to barley, the returns for its being at or above an average crop, were 2,750; below an average, 337; for oats, at or above an average, 2,634: below an average, 260; for beans and peas, at or above an average crop, 2,273; below an average, 466; turnips, &c., above an average, 2,750; below an average, 333; potatoes at or above an average, 1,898; below an average, 1,660. He trusted that so far as they could they had done everything in their power to disabuse the country of the idea that there was any danger of famine; for though the potatoes might have failed to some extent, yet in other kinds of produce there was abundance; and

they ought to thank Providence for thus remedying the loss of one article of food, by the abundance of another. But, in looking at this question, he should like as much as possible to follow the two different statements made by the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government; and he would make allusion first of all to his speech on the Address, because, with that admirable Parliamentary tact which the right hon. Gentlemen knew so well how to follow, he made that speech just the commencement of the one that afterwards followed, and which now formed the subject of the present debate. In that speech the right hon. Baronet stated that since taxes had been withdrawn from flax, meat, wool, and lard, the prices of those articles had greatly advanced. He would take the case of flax in the first instance. That was an article at one time much cultivated in the county he had the honour to represent; but since the repeal of the duty, the cultivation of flax was almost entirely given over; and such was the case in many other counties of England. It was true that flax was now grown in Ireland; and why? The flax that used to be grown in England was now cultivated there, because the soil was equally propitious for its culture, and the wages of labour were much smaller. He had in his hand a return from four parishes in the county of Somerset, which showed the amount lost by the labouring population from this measure. He would merely take the averages, pointing out what the amount of cultivation in flax was before the diminution of the duty, and what it was at the present time—what was the amount of labour which it called forth, and what the loss had been to the agricultural population by throwing this trade open. These parishes were Chiselborough, Odecomb, and East and West Coker, and the returns were to this effect. The number of acres annually laid down in the cultivation of flax, previous to the withdrawal of protection, and since that occurrence, were as follows :—

	Before.	Since.
Chiselborough	100	10
Odecomb	100	4
East Coker	150	12
West Coker	360	20
	710	46

The expense of cultivating an acre of flax, dressing and preparing it for the market, was 5*l.*; and the cultivation of it afforded full labour for a large portion of the year to the whole of the industrial population of these parishes. Since the withdrawal of protection and the abandonment of cultivation the loss to these parishes each year in labour was respectively—

Chiselborough	£1350
Odecomb	1440
East Coker	2070
West Coker	5100
Total	9960

And all this by the operation of the principle of free trade. He (Mr. Miles) would next come to the subject of meat, regarding which the Member for Newcastle had left out one statement that he wished he had brought before the House. He attributed the high price of meat at the present time to various causes, chiefly to the murrain that had arisen of late years, and to the scarcity of provender and the failure of the green crops that had been experienced in the southern and western counties in 1844 and 1845. Now it was perfectly true that all those causes led to the high prices of meat; but the hon. Member did not follow up the matter sufficiently; he did not state the decrease that had taken place in the supply of Smithfield market—a decrease during the last six months of 1845, as compared with a similar period for the last three weeks of 1844, of 250,000. Nor did he state that there was a weekly decrease in sheep to the extent of 16,000, as compared with last year. All this would account for the high price of meat at the present time. The right hon. Baronet should also recollect that the animals brought into market in 1845 were not half so fat as those produced this year. The want of proper feeding in that and the preceding year lessened the animals in weight from seven to ten stones, and consequently there was a greater consumption of animals without the same quantity of meat as usual having been obtained. He would next come to the subject of wool; but before he did so he would take the liberty of suggesting to Gentlemen on the other side of the House that this article was a proof that the agriculturists could not be fairly charged with opposition to all abolition, even in matters affecting directly their own interests. The manufacturers wished the duty repealed, and the agriculturists, seeing that the import of the short wool from the Continent was advantageous to them, to mix with their own Southdown wool, at once acceded to their demand. The consequence had been a great increase in the amount of wool used by the manufacturers, and the price of the

article, from the goodness of trade, necessarily rose. In this case, as he believed it was in all others, the interests of manufacture and agriculture went together; when the one prospered, the other must; when one fell, the other would fall also. As to the subject of lard, it was impossible to state, from the information they possessed, what was the state of the trade; but he believed that when the proper return was before them it would be found that one great reason why the price of lard was so high, was the deficiency in the supply of oil. He felt strongly, and so must the House, that it was the duty of every Minister to promote the welfare, and to ensure the confidence, of all classes—agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing, in this great country; but he would ask if, notwithstanding the prosperity which had existed during the last three years, there was not a feeling in men's minds that they were not safe in the hands of the right hon. Baronet. The changes in the Tariff of 1842 were of such a character that they could not but look for further measures from the right hon. Baronet of a similar description; and it was natural that some degree of uneasiness should be experienced. The right hon. Baronet seemed to treat the home market as nothing: he had allied himself to the manufacturing interest, and would sacrifice our own manufactures to the foreign. He seemed to have thrown overboard the industrious energies of the nation, and left them to competition with the lightly taxed and low paid people of the Continent of Europe, and with the capitalists of the illimitable territory and lightly taxed Continent of America. Were we manufacturers? So were they. Were we producers of food? So were they. Our manufactures were in the greatest state of prosperity, and had reached the highest point of perfection. The skill of our people, it was said, was infinite; but the ingenuity of the mechanic was completely superseding the skill and labour of the artisan. Capital they would find always flowing into any kind of trade in which there was a chance of gain; so that, with capital abundant, and manufacturing ingenuity and skill great, the country might surely become, but for the restrictive policy of other nations, manufacturers for the world. But he would ask them to look at the commercial policy of France, of Russia, and of America. He was sorry to detain the House, but he felt it necessary to trouble them at some length by referring to statistical documents rather than to assertions of his own, in order to make out his case fairly before the House. He begged, in the first place, to call their attention to the commercial policy of France; and he did not think that he could do better than quote from a book which was laid on the Table some time ago—he meant the Report on the Commercial Tariffs and Regulations of the several States of Europe and America, which the hon. Member for Bolton conceived that no one but a free trader ever looked into; but he for one, had certainly perused it, he trusted with some advantage. He found that Mr. Macgregor, in his statement on the commercial policy of France, said—

"The soil and climate of France are adapted to the growth in perfection of almost every agricultural protection. All descriptions of corn, vegetables, and most fruits are, grown. Flax, hemp, oleaginous seeds, beetroot, various grasses, and plants yielding dyes, are cultivated extensively. The olive, the mulberry-tree, the rice, maize, wheat, and the potato, all find a natural soil, and flourish in this universally favoured country."

France, of all countries in Europe, should produce so cheaply as to have no pretence for restricting the importation of foreign corn. Notwithstanding this undoubted fact, a Committee of the Deputies reported, in 1842, that—

"If we admitted the food and raiment and victuals, and colonial and other objects, which strangers would bring to our ports, we might, probably, gain some hundreds of millions. Should we be the richer in consequence? For the riches of a State are in the elements of labour, and when labour fails to find employment, misery is reproduced. And it is not only a question of comfort, but one of existence; for if wheat were introduced without duty from the Baltic or Black Sea, our Mauritius shores would remain uncultivated, and the effect of a ruinous competition would affect more and more nearly the whole of our agricultural population."

Again, Mr. Macgregor says with respect to Russia—

"Russia may be said to prohibit the importation of every material like those which can be drawn by the labour of her serfs from her mines and forests; and of every foreign manufactured article, in order that the labour of their serfs, with the aid of machinery either imported or made in the country, and directed by skilful foreign artisans, shall be made to produce articles either similar to, or that may be substituted for, those of foreign manufacture."

But what is the case with regard to manufactured goods? Is it not notorious that in common cotton goods, foreigners can successfully compete with us in neutral markets; and what then would be the result were they to be fully admitted into the home market? It should be remembered also that these foreign nations produce food as well as we do. But what was the

difference between them and this country? Our territory was limited, while the whole world, which was proposed to be thrown open to compete with it, was illimitable. He requested the House to bear in mind also the industrial skill which was daily developing itself in the agricultural districts, and which was going on to such an extent as to show that the remark of the right hon. Baronet Sir R. Peel, on the first night of the Session, viz.—that agriculture was yet in its infancy, was not borne out by facts; for to a casual observer it must be apparent that in the north, south, east, and west, within the last few years, a better system of husbandry had been gradually introduced; science and capital had been brought to bear upon the soil, which was now bringing forth fruits which showed that, with the increase of the population, increased crops had been produced to keep pace with it. But let them look at foreign nations, and what was their state? If they looked at Poland and Russia, they would find them almost uncultivated, without capital, and the serfs in the most abject condition, meanly clothed and badly fed; and here was a measure the effect of which was to encourage those countries to compete with us in our own markets, and to enrich them, and in the same proportion to impoverish us. Let them look, however, to what was laid down by Adam Smith on the subject—an authority always quoted on the other side when it served their purpose, but which when it did not was treated as an old almanac. He begged, therefore, to press that authority into his service, at any rate in this argument as to the relative position of the home and foreign market and the advantages to be derived from the former. But before reading the extract, he begged to express his astonishment at the remarks which fell from the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, in reply to the admirable speech of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, who stated the difficulties in which the coachmakers, the papermakers, the shoemakers, and other traders, would be placed by the general importation of Brussels coaches, Parisian boots and shoes, and Saxon cloths; and he stated, that inasmuch as we did this, we should naturally throw the labour of our own people out of the market, unless the population was so great, or the demand so great, as to consume not only the produce of our own manufactures, but likewise that of other countries, with which we should be deluged. The right hon. Baronet talked of exchange; no doubt there would be exchange, but it was an exchange which was not equally beneficial for English capital as for foreign goods; for if the transaction took place between an English gentleman and an English coachmaker, two capitals were reproduced, and the whole benefit accrued to England. But to revert to the quotation he was about to make from Adam Smith. That eminent authority says—

> "The capital employed in the home trade of any country will generally give encouragement and support to a greater quantity of productive labour in that country, and increase the value of its annual produce, more than an equal capital employed in the foreign trade of consumption; and the capital employed in this latter trade has in both these respects a still greater advantage over an equal capital employed in the carrying trade."

If he wanted any argument to support the cause which he advocated, he thought the statement made by Adam Smith was sufficient. He would now quote from memory the language of Mr. Gregg, of Manchester, who he believed, was a member of the League, as to the competition of foreign goods with our own in neutral markets. That Gentleman said, that the coarse cottons of Switzerland, the hardware of some parts of Germany, and the woollens of Saxony, were preferred to English produce in several foreign markets. He said also that Saxon hosiery, on which there was a duty of 20 per cent., successfully competed in our home market with the produce of our manufacturers. But if this duty was reduced 10 per cent. as proposed, he would just ask how our manufacturers could meet the competition? It could only be met in two ways: first, either by the improvement of machinery superseding manual labour—which improvements, Saxony, in the course of two or three years, would get possession of, and then by the aid of her lower wages be enabled to drive the manufacturer here out of his own market; or, in the second place, by the eventual reduction of the British labourers' wages. If there was any other way to meet the difficulty, he should be glad to have it shown. He had yet to learn there was any other way. He would ask them to look at the contests between master manufacturers and the labourers continually going on—the trades' unions, the strikes for wages—and then to say, if manufacturers desired to keep their profits, must they not do it by lowering the wages of the labourer? It was the determination on the part of the workmen not to submit to lower wages—that caused the contests and the strikes which occurred. A constant contest was waging between

labourers and employers; and he must say, that he found the price of labour eventually fell in these contests. He would now beg to direct the attention of the House to the arguments of the right hon. Baronet, founded on the amount of exports, taking three years of very great plenty, and then the three preceding years, which were adverse years; and founding thereupon an advantageous comparison. It struck him, however, that if he went back a little further than did the right hon. Baronet, when he made his statement; and if he adopted, with the triennial calculations of the right hon. Baronet, a cycle of twelve years divided into triennial averages, it would be found that the price of corn had nothing whatever to do with the amount of exports. He found, that though there was, on the whole period of twelve years, an increase in trade, yet that particular years exhibited a decrease as compared with each other. He did not find that the price of corn was affected in a simultaneous way. But, with the leave of the House, he would take the triennial calculations, and he would begin with 1834. In 1834, the average prices of wheat were 46*s.*, the exports were 41,000,000*l.*; in 1835, wheat was 39*s.*, the exports 47,000,000*l.*; in 1836, wheat was 48*s.* 9*d.*, and the exports 47,000,000*l.*: so that he found the average prices of wheat were 44*s.* 8*d.*, while he found the triennial average of exports to be 45,000,000*l.* And then, going into the next years, they would perceive, in 1837, that the average price of corn was 45*s.* 9*d.*, the exports being 53,000,000*l.*; in the next year the average price of corn was 45*s.* 1*d.*, the exports then being 42,000,000*l.*; in 1839, the average price of corn was 70*s.* 5*d.*, and the exports were 50,000,000*l.*, which made the average price of corn during that triennial period 63*s.* 9*d.*, and the average amount of exports 48,000,000*l.* Then, going further into the years 1840, 1841, and 1842; in the first year, the average price of corn was 66*s.* 3*d.*, whereas the exports were only 53,000,000*l.*; in the next year, the average price of corn was 64*s.* 3*d.*, while the exports were 51,000,000*l.*; in 1842, the price of corn was 70*s.* 3*d.*, the average amount of exports being 47,000,000*l.*: and they would from this see, that during this other triennial period the average exports were 50,000,000*l.*, the average price of corn appearing at 62*s.* 7*d.* And, taking the last years according to the figures furnished by the right hon. Baronet himself; in 1843, the average price of corn was 50*s.* 1*d.*, and the average amount of exports 52,000,000*l.*; in 1844, corn was at 51*s.* 3*d.*, while the average exports were 58,000,000*l.*; in 1845, for which year there was an absence of any authentic calculations, they had wheat at 52*s.*, and they had no falling-off, according to the right hon. Baronet's calculations, for the exports were 58,000,000*l.*: so that for this period the exports appeared as 56,000,000*l.*, with an average price of corn of about 51*s.* They, therefore, found the exports gradually but progressively increasing; while they, in the same ratio, found the price of corn decreasing; they would find that the price of corn had no relative affinity whatever to the amount of exports; and they could not but come to the conclusion, so far as their exports in the foreign trade were concerned, that there naturally depended on the demand and supply, the prices of corn being no ingredient. From the consideration of this subject, he was led into the inquiry as to what was in reality the cause of our prosperity—an inquiry which had been already alluded to by several hon. Members. There would have been less difficulty in answering the question if the right hon. Baronet had been good enough to give to the country his speech on the second, instead of, as had been the case, on the first night of the Session; the people of the country would then have been able to distinguish what the prosperity consisted of. On the second night, as would be in the recollection of the House, the right hon. Baronet brought forward the question of railways; he then gave to them the number of Bills that were passed, the estimated expenses for the formation and completion of those railways; and he then made an assertion, which could not be controverted, that, computing each line to take three years in completing, during that period upwards of 23,000,000*l.* sterling, which had been before locked up, would be thrown directly into the labour market. Now, he (Mr. Miles) would leave it to a discerning public to judge which had been the greatest benefit to the country—the foreign trade so much upheld by the right hon. Baronet, or the expenditure of that immense mass of capital thus set afloat in the country and into the market, by railway construction. It was, therefore, palpable that that extraordinary prosperity made so much of by the right hon. Baronet, was to be attributed in a great measure, if not en-

tirely, to the capital let loose in the way he had mentioned. Under such circumstances, not only was there a greater demand, and a greater stimulus given to the supply of the common necessaries of life, but likewise a greatly increased consumption of what were termed common luxuries. In connexion with the railways being formed, an unprecedented prosperity, sudden in its origin, but lasting in its effects, had taken place in the iron trade. He held in his hand a document which showed, by the convincing aid of figures, the extraordinary depression in that trade in 1842; and showed further, the still more remarkable progress in prosperity and profits, not only with the ironmasters, but in the wages and the condition of the miners. In 1842 common bar-iron was quoted at from 4*l.* 10*s.* to 5*l.* per ton; in 1845 the same iron was quoted at 9*l.* to 9*l.* 10*s.* In 1842 the workmen were but half employed, and half the works were standing, the colliers getting 2*s.* per day, and having only in the week three days' work; in 1846 the colliers had 3*s.* 6*d.* a day, daily, for ten hours' work; in 1842, the miners' wages were 5*s.* 6*d.* per ton, and in 1846 they were 10*s.* 6*d.* per ton. In the latter period all the works were in full work, new works were being erected on all sides, shafts being sunk for coal and iron stone—workmen not to be had, and, for that reason, the masters at their mercy; so that if it were necessary to increase the supply it would be sinews rather than money which would be found to be wanting; consequently, it would not be possible to find iron for foreign demand. The masters were full of engagements, which would last for three years, with prices varying from 10*l.* to 13*l.* 10*s.* a ton, while in 1842 they made and sold at 5*l.* 5*s.*, the delivery costing 10*s.* per ton. These were facts which would at once show the activity created by the capital alluded to being thus thrown into the labour market, and the benefit derived was strictly a home benefit, for it was known seven-eighths of the iron trade came into the British market. And how that activity had told upon the different articles of food and the different articles of consumption was shown by the circulars emanating from parties engaged in the several trades, and particularly by a circular relative to the fruit trade, and which he now held in his hand. It referred to the peculiar prosperity so often spoken of, experienced in the fruit as in every other trade, and stated that, although a continuance of prosperity to manufactures would not alone secure such a result, a valuable and numerous class of consumers had presented themselves in the persons employed, in various ways, in the constructing of railways: these were a new class of consumers, having liberal wages, by those wages being enabled to indulge in luxuries beyond the reach of the agricultural labourer and the ordinary artisan, and at all times uninfluenced by the fluctuations to which these others were exposed of trade and of the seasons. He trusted that he had succeeded by evidence in proving his assertion as to the original cause of the recent progress in every branch of industry and of the country, and he would, therefore, now ask the public to pause before they gave in their support to the new measures of the right hon. Baronet, if, unaware of the truth, they deemed that their past fortunes were to be ascribed to the adoption of his similar preceding measures. He would also ask whether the state of the foreign markets was in so favourable a condition as represented? He would ask whether China was not overstocked, and all English manufactures there selling at below prime cost? and he would further ask if the Indian market was not in precisely the same situation? And it appeared to him that, if forgetting the experience of the past, they went on in England manufacturing in the same ratio, there would come about one of those cycles in the history of commerce which gradually, progressively, and more or less intensely, had, at certain times, overtaken, and, in overtaking, had ruined many manufacturers. It was an inevitable consequence, for overproduction in the present manufacturing system necessarily followed on an insane and uncalculating competition; depending as the manufacturers did on the action of machinery so scientifically applied, and so extraordinary in its result. With the permission of the House he would now, as briefly as he possibly could, make some allusions to the case of the agriculturists. In the first place, glancing at the Corn Law of 1842, he would ask, of what had they to complain? He had supported the right hon. Baronet in that measure, because he believed it to have been an improvement, with respect to the manner of taking the corn averages, on the law of 1828. Under the existing law, the return of consumption had been increased, because 130 additional towns had been added to the list from which the average was computed. A much greater quantity of corn would thus appear to be consumed; and the averages were consequently

kept in a more just and regular way. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department founded his opinion in reference to the relative prices of bread and wheat on the state of the London market. He had on more than one occasion endeavoured to draw the attention of the House to that subject, and to show that in the metropolis the prices of bread and flour bore no relative proportion whatever to the price of wheat; and that if blame were to be attached to any individuals for enhancing the price of food it was not to the farmer, but to the baker and miller. He recollected deducing a proof in support of this proposition from the comparative prices of bread and wheat in Paris. He showed that the prices of bread and flour in the Parisian market were much more nearly allied to the price of wheat than was the case in the British metropolis. As another instance of this fact he would beg to refer to the prices current in November last. On the first of that month the price of wheat was 62*s.*, according to the averages—that was the sum claimed by the farmer; but at that very time the loaf of bread was, he was sorry to say, charged to the consumer at 10*d.* He had gone through a vast number of calculations, and he could assure the House that it was not only his own opinion, but the opinion of other persons competent to judge, that when the price of wheat averaged 62*s.*, the price of bread, allowing a fair profit both to the miller and the baker, and also allowing for the chance of bad debts, ought to be no more than 7*d.* Therefore any blame in this matter should not rest with the farmer or the Corn Laws. His hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire had put a question to the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, which he certainly thought had been answered in a most extraordinary manner. The question was whether he had calculated what the price of corn would be under the free-trade system; and the right hon. Baronet replied that that would depend on the seasons. That, indeed, would be the case, if they had only the climate of their own country to depend on. But when they recollected that they were hereafter to raise their supply of corn from the whole world, and when they bore in mind the various atmospheric peculiarities of different continents, it was evident that that answer was absurd. He trusted that the right hon. Baronet, who had proved himself to be so good a calculator with regard to the Corn Law of 1842, would endeavour to inform them of the probable prices, at least for the years 1849 and 1850. So true had been his calculations in 1842, that, ever since, prices had literally ranged between the two points upon which he had fixed; and, therefore, he thought they had a right to demand a similar prophecy from the right hon. Baronet on the present occasion. The proposed measure would seem to unite the different plans of both the right hon. Baronet and the noble Lord the Member for London; and, considering all they had heard about letters and interviews between these distinguished individuals on a late occasion— [An hon. Member: There were no letters.] He might have been wrong in mentioning letters: he should have said, communications; but, considering all that had passed on that occasion, it was not too much to suppose that a sort of compromise had been entered into, and that one party expressed a willingness, if half the sliding-scale were continued, to adopt half of the noble Lord's fixed duty. Thus it was that they were to have a 10*s.* duty when corn averaged a certain amount; and that the scale was then to descend to 4*s.*, or to half the former proposition of the noble Lord, from which, at the end of three years, it was to sink down to 1*s.*, or a mere nominal duty. Now, on the part of the agriculturists, he would say this—he was not going to desert his principles; he would oppose the plan of the right hon. Baronet, and he would also oppose that of the noble Lord—that is, if the noble Lord showed fight, and persevered in pressing his view of the question; but from what had occurred some nights ago, when the noble Lord made his speech on the subject, he (Mr. Miles) very much doubted whether it was the noble Lord's intention to bring forward any Amendment for an immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. If, however, the question to be decided were between the proposition for immediate repeal and that of the right hon. Baronet, he would himself, and so, he had no doubt, would a large number of his hon. Friends behind him, feel it a duty to oppose both propositions. But at the same time he should say, on the part of the farmers, that in his mind the proposition of the noble Lord would be infinitely the better of the two. And he would tell them why. There was no chance whatever of any large access of corn into this market for the present year, neither was there any probability of any great surplus being available after the next harvest; because spring

wheat was not grown in Germany, nor in most parts of the Continent, and the usual crop had been sown in autumn last, which would come into consumption early in 1847. Therefore, no preparation was made for any unusual supply of the British market in foreign countries, because the plan of the right hon. Baronet was not known when the crop had been put into the ground. As far as 1847 was concerned, there would thus be no fresh land put into cultivation; neither could there be any extensive system of warehousing, both of which undoubtedly would be attempted by capitalists prior to the removal of all duty in 1849. Therefore, though much misery and wretchedness would inevitably be the lot of the agricultural population in this country, as the consequence of the transition—and in fact, the noble Lord the Member for the city of London had himself admitted that a transition could not take place without producing that misery and wretchedness—still, it was his conviction that less misery and less suffering would result from the proposition of the noble Lord, than must emanate from the measure of the right hon. Baronet. He would not go into the questions of local burdens. The returns moved for by the hon. Member for Sheffield, would, it was said, be of the fullest possible nature; and all he would say on the subject was, that he was ready to become a Member of any Committee that might be appointed to investigate those returns. With regard to the poor rates, they might not appear so hard when the Bill of the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department would come into operation; because, under that Bill, what was refused as an act of justice, was proposed to be done as an act of compensation; He alluded to the proposal for giving a claim for relief to every person having an industrial residence of five years. But would not the other local charges be still severely felt? He would take the instance of an acre of land cultivated under the four-course system. A farm consisting of three-fourths arable, and one-fourth pasture land, would require, to be cultivated according to this system, at an average of from 30*s.* to 35*s.* an acre for labour. To that were to be added poor rates, highway rate, and church rate, making together from 4*s.* to 4*s.* 6*d.* per acre, which, added to the cost for labour, would give an average of 37*s.* an acre; and to what extent was it proposed that this charge was to be reduced? He had been astonished to hear the argument of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War, and confessed he could not understand his reasoning. That right hon. Gentleman had said we could not get a large quantity of corn from America, because the population there was large. This was one reason why they could send us large quantities; and as the population of America increased, they would be enabled to ship to this country such enormous masses of corn as would entirely overwhelm the production of Great Britain. But there was one part of the speech of the right hon. Baronet to which he wished particularly to refer, and more especially because they had been so many years his assistants in political life. He had said that this was a time for the agriculturists to lay aside all fears from foreign competition. Now, when he read an extract from what he held in his hand of the agricultural capabilities of America, he thought that would fully show that their alarm was not without some just cause. It was not alone to the quantity of corn now grown in that country that they should look. The cultivation of the teeming and fruitful land of the United States was rapidly advancing—the population was increasing at the most extraordinary rate, and that population, active and industrious, occupied a vast and boundless territory, containing some of the richest land in the world. They only wanted a profitable market for the excess of their produce to raise an infinitely greater quantity of grain than they had hitherto grown; and he had no doubt but that in a few years they would be found to throw in a mass of corn into this country which would completely overwhelm the British farmer. Passing aside all the corn that would come by the lakes and canals, and find its way to New York and other ports, he would instance the case of New Orleans alone. The products of nine vast States all went down by the Mississippi and its tributary streams to that port, and some idea of the vast quantities of grain that might be expected from thence could be formed from the fact, that while the whole area of the British islands amounted to 119,000 square miles, the superficies of those States which looked to New Orleans as an outport, contained no less than 450,000 square miles, inhabited by a population of 5,500,000 persons. He would ask any man who had been in America, or who knew these facts, whether the agriculturists of this country were not justified in looking with alarm to the immense import of corn which might be expected

from that quarter. Then there was Russia, too—a country whose capabilities were not well known, from which the competition with the agriculture of this country would be very great. He would trouble the House with a few statistical documents which he had prepared on this subject, showing the agricultural capacities of that great empire :—

"That part of Russia," said the Report compiled from the consular returns, "which lies west of the Ural Mountains, presents an immense plain, declining westward by an easy descent. This vast plain has a great variety of climates, soils, and products. Its northern part, which declines towards the White and Frozen Seas, is covered with forests and marshes, and is but little fit for cultivation. The more southerly portion of this great plain includes the whole region along the Wolga, as far as the steppes or deserts between the Caspian and the Sea of Azof, and constitutes the most fertile part of Russia; generally, it has a productive soil, the arable and meadow lands exceeding the woods, marshes, and heaths."

[The hon. Member also read and referred to the document placed below*.] He would state to the House the capabilities of Tamboff. [*Laughter.*] He had no desire or intention to exaggerate the resources of Tam-

* AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE.

Name of Province.	Area in Acres.	Population.	Soil.	Arable.	Pasture.
RUSSIA.					
Northern Provinces.					
Vologda (1)	93,312,000	747,500	Fertile.	9,000,000	4,000,000
Pskof (2)	14,180,000	705,300	Poor.	Not described	Not described
Smolensko (3)	13,494,000	1,064,200	Fertile.	Not described	Not described
Viatka (4)	28,080,000	1,511,600	Good, generally fertile.	6,500,000	6,500,000
Baltic Provinces.					
Esthonia (5)	16,400,000	Not given	Not adapted for growth of corn.	Not described.	
Polish Provinces. (Exclusive of the Kingdom)					
Grodno (6)	8,788,000	600,000	Alluvial and sandy.	Not described.	
Minsk (7)	26,280,000	1,304,800	Poor.	Not described.	
Mohilef (8)	11,136,000	846,000	Fertile.	Not described.	
Witepsk (9)	10,560,000	717,000	Medium fertility.	Not described.	
Tchernigoff (10)	17,920,000	1,300,000	Fertile.	Not described.	
Bialystock (11)	2,199,040	260,000	Medium fertility.	Not described.	
Volhynia (12)	14,348,000	1,314,000	Fertile.	Not described.	
Poltawa (13)	14,200,000	1,622,000	Excellent.	Not described.	
Kief (14)	12,800,000	460,000	Fertile.	Not described.	
Kharkeff (15)	11,136,000	1,334,000	Very fertile.	Not described.	
Podolia (16)	7,680,000	1,548,000	Generally very fertile.	Not described.	
CENTRAL RUSSIA.					
Toula (17)	7,680,000	1,040,000	Fertile.	Not described.	
Voroneje or Woronetz (18)	19,840,000	1,507,200	Fertile.	Not described.	
Koursk (19)	9,900,000	1,700,000	Remarkably fertile.	Not described.	

(1) 10,000,000 acres more are computed as reclaimable for agriculture and pasture.

(2) More grain, chiefly rye, barley, and oats, is raised than is sufficient for this thinly peopled province. The annual produce is about 3,500,000 chetwerts, of which upwards of 1,000,000 may be exported.

(3) Produces more corn, chiefly rye, than is sufficient for home consumption. Hemp, flax, tobacco, and hops, are cultivated.

(3) Agriculture the principal occupation of the people, especially along the banks of the large and navigable rivers. Average crops of corn are more than the usual consumption of the people.

(5) Agriculture is, however, the chief employment of the people, and they raise more corn than is sufficient for their own consumption.

(6) Principal agricultural product is rye, about 6,825,000 hectolitres are said to be produced annually: a third part of which is exported. Flax, hemp, and hops are grown in considerable quantities; exports consist of corn, flour, cattle, and wool.

(7) Though one of the poorest and worst cultivated parts of the empire, Minsk produces more corn, principally rye, than is required for home consumption. Hemp and flax are important products, as are potash and tar.

(8) Though agriculture is extremely backward, nearly 4,000,000 quarters of corn are annually grown, a quantity considerably exceeding the home demand. Rye, barley, oats, hemp, and flax, principal products; and in the gardens, hops, pulse, &c.

(9) Notwithstanding the soil is of medium fertility, and agriculture in a very backward state, more corn is produced than is required for consumption.

boff, and he could most sincerely state that his sole object was to put the House in possession of the best information. Tamboff, which embraced twenty-five millions of square miles— [*Laughter.*] He did not at all wonder at the laughter of the House, because it almost seemed an impossibility. He meant to say, not twenty-five millions of square miles, but twenty-five thousand. That, then, was the area; and even at the estimate of Mr. Macgregor the produce of it might be taken at twelve millions of bushels. These were no quotations of his. They were put before the country in a statistical work of authority to which all might refer; and if the hon. Member for Northamptonshire had found that in it even addition and subtraction were not understood, he could not be responsible for the information in these statistics not being comprehended. He had merely given the results as he had found them stated. He had stated the actual produce of the Russian and Polish provinces. [*Laughter.*] All he could say was, that there was an immense acreage in those provinces; they were known for their fine loamy rich soil, and for their vast production. He would now proceed to another district. The hon. Member referred to the capabilities of Novogorod and other Russian provinces, and said that the progress of Russia in agricultural production had been more extraordinary than that of North America. He would now mention the area of these different provinces. Upon a small computation, they produced quantities of corn a great deal too large for their own consumption; and he found that their fertile lands included an area of 911,186 square miles. He had thought it necessary to give as full an answer as possible to the assertion of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War (Mr. Sidney Herbert) of the needless alarm which he said was spreading through the agricultural ranks. He thought he had shown that immediately the markets of this country were thrown open to the different nations of the Continent, in that instant would all these vast and productive lands be cultivated; and by just so much as they were cultivated, would the fair lands of our own country be neglected. He could not conceive a prospect more dismal. He could not conceive anything more disheartening. Yet they were still told "cultivate, cultivate." "Spend more capital," it was said; "bring out more produce." But what was to be the result? When they had perilled their capital—when they had employed their labourers, and when the industrious peasantry had done everything to insure abundant crops, then would rush in all those millions of quarters from abroad, our markets would be immediately paralysed, and it would be found that our farms had been cultivated at a ruinous price. These were his reasons, on the part of the agricultural interest, for opposing the measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. It had been held as sound doctrine by political economists, and by the President of the United States, even with the boundless territory of that country, that it was of the utmost importance to obtain your own supplies of food from your own fields. He believed that by the proposed measure they would so alarm the country that not only would they paralyse the efforts of the farmer, but, as he had often before stated in that House, they would being irremediable distress on a large portion of the labouring population. Distress among the agricultural classes spread in exactly the

(10) All sorts of corn are produced, but principally rye, barley, and oats.

(11) Agriculture is almost the only employment of the people, and considerable quantities of corn (especially rye and wheat), with linseed, hops, and timber, are sent to Dantzic and Elbing.

(12) Produces, on an average, a considerable surplus of corn above the consumption.

(13) This and the surrounding governments constitute what may be called the granary of Russia. It is one of the best cultivated districts of the empire. The return of the corn crops is said to be as six to one, the total produce being about 6,506,000 chetwerts, of which about 1,500,000 are exported.

(14) Though agriculture be very indifferent, the soil is described as so fertile that the return in most sorts of grain is said to be 6 to 1.

(15) All sorts of corn are raised, produce in ordinary years amounting to about 5,000,000 chetwerts, of which 1,000,000 are exported. Hops and potatoes also grown.

(16) Climate healthy and mild enough for the vine and mulberry to flourish in the open air. Corn is produced in abundance; the produce of wheat in 1820 was estimated at 6,000,000 chetwerts, a quantity exceeding the home consumption by one-third.

(17) Produces a surplus of rye and some good wheat over the consumption of the inhabitants.

(18) Probably the most productive government in Russia. It is stated that a good crop of corn of all kinds will yield about 1,000,000 quarters over the consumption of the inhabitants. Wheat, rye, barley, peas, beans, poppies, tobacco, hemp, flax, apples, cherries, melons, are all grown.

(19) Agriculture is in a barbarous state; yet Hassel states that wheat and rye yield 9 to 1.

inverse ratio of that which might be desired; for, instead of the landlord being the first to suffer, the tenant next, and the labourer last, the labourer, in times of adversity, was sure to feel the first access of an unfavourable change, the smaller tenant next, and the landlord last. And let them recollect how numerous were the small tenants at present in this country. Let them recollect that they were much more numerous than farmers of capital; and that the position of the small tenant was a stepping-stone for the industrious labourer to more prosperous circumstances. That they would, by adopting the Government proposal, destroy that class, he could not entertain the slightest doubt. They might also depend upon it, that as they reduced the profits of the farmer, so would they reduce the wages of the labourer. The wages of the labourer were paid every Saturday night; and if they diminished the profits of the farmer, the wages paid by the farmer would of necessity be proportionably depressed; so that the very persons who were the least able to bear the evil would feel the first shock of distress. He would not trespass much longer on their time; he should have other opportunities of stating his views upon the question; but he could not help then adding, that he hoped and trusted that although the agricultural party were deprived of a leader, there existed among them sufficient talent to defend their own cause, although it might have become somewhat rusted from want of use. He believed that not only the farmers, but likewise the operatives, and the smaller tradesmen, were beginning to feel that in the maintenance of the protective system their best interests were involved. He would himself have to present a petition from the spirit-dealers of Scotland in reprobation of the right hon. Baronet's measure. There would be plenty of time and opportunity for him to say more on the subject; and after having so long detained the House, he would no longer trespass upon its attention; but he would say that this was a melancholy issue of all their battles, from 1835 up to the time when the right hon. Baronet had gained a majority. He was the last man in the world to accuse the right hon. Baronet of changing his opinions. Every man had a right to change for good and sufficient reasons; but he (Mr. Miles) had dared the right hon. Baronet to the issue of an appeal to the country. Whatever right hon. and hon. Members might do, he was convinced the country was not prepared for these changes. He told the right hon. Baronet, moreover, that instead of gaining adherents, he was losing supporters. He told him, besides, that many of our trades were beginning to look with some degree of apprehension how their interests would be affected by these free-trade measures; and it was not impossible that petitions against the proposed Tariff would be laid upon the Table, long before it was carried through that House. Of this he was sure, that the operatives and the labourers, if they understood their own interests, would one and all rise against the proposition of the right hon. Baronet; for if any measure was likely to reduce their wages, that propounded by the right hon. Baronet was the very scheme. It might not, indeed, have that effect at first, nor for a time, but that would be the result. The right hon. Baronet, with his comprehensive mind, must surely have looked a little into the future as to the issues of his measure; and was it likely there would be a cessation of competition on the part of foreign countries? What then would become of the classes he had spoken of at the end of two or three years, when every duty was taken off, because he held there must be free trade in every thing, or in nothing? As to the manufactures retaining a protection of 10 per cent. upon their products after the Corn Laws were repealed, the idea was ridiculous. Her Majesty's Ministers might rely upon it they would eventually see not only the body of the people, the great consumers, but the great producers, rising up against them, and with curses execrating the time when a free-trade Minister first sat upon the Ministerial bench. He, for one, was ready, and had always been willing, to take his share in obtaining all reductions of duty; and he would never endeavour, should the present measure be passed, to excite discontent in the people against the right hon. Baronet, because he believed him to be actuated by conscientious motives. He believed that the right hon. Baronet acted from conscientious and honest motives; but he, nevertheless, believed that the course of policy which he hod adopted was perilous to the kingdom, and if he wanted a proof of the correctness of that opinion, he could refer to the speech of the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool. He had no doubt that if the people spoke out on this subject, and if there were a majority of fifty in the House of Commons, he had yet to learn that a Ministry—and a capable

Ministry—might not be formed on the principles of protection. He had always noticed the minds of politicians so framed, that when the people decidedly took any particular side, there was an efficient Ministry always to be found to support that view; and he therefore thought that if the people expressed themselves on this point so as to secure a proper majority in the House of Commons, a Ministry such as he had described, might be formed without that truckling between Ministers and Opposition, and that worst of all subterfuges, opposing a measure in terms, and supporting it by votes. Whatever might eventually become of that question, there was one fact of which every one must now be convinced; namely, that all those who wished their interests to be protected or defended, might look up for co-operation and assistance to those who were arrayed in opposition to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. They would, he could assure those parties, stand by the protection of native industry so long as they continued in that House; they would, while they retained their seats, maintain in that House, by their votes, the principles of protection to agriculture, and not to agriculture alone, but to every other branch of native industrial exertion. He felt that in all he had said on that occasion, the county constituencies perfectly agreed with him—they had returned a majority to Parliament against the free-trade measures of the noble Lord the Member for the city of London; and they now saw in the same Parliament a measure brought forward to abolish the protection which agriculture enjoyed, whilst they had it intimated that the changes were not to stop there, but that the duties on sugar and timber were also to be obliterated. Could they, after such statements, ever again give their confidence to the right hon. Baronet, who had betrayed their interests, or at any rate the interests of a majority of that House? Should they not always look in future with suspicion on those who, from their intelligence, and capacity, and power of debating in Parliament, ought to stand at the head of that party? He could not conclude without stating that he admired the bold, the manly, and the upright bearing of the noble Lord the Member for London, and would much rather give such conduct his approbation, than blindly follow the steps of a cautious and temporizing Minister.

Mr. H. BAILLIE said, the hon. Member for Somersetshire (Mr. W. Miles) had wholly misrepresented what fell from him on a former evening. What he had said on the occasion referred to, was, that he would support the right hon. Baronet's measure, because it would be most injurious to the best interests of the country to protract a struggle in which the interests of the people were opposed to those of the landed gentry.

Mr. W. MILES expressed his regret that he had put an erroneous construction on the hon. Gentleman's observations.

The Earl of MARCH moved the Adjournment of the Debate.

On the Speaker putting the Question of Adjournment,

Lord NORTHLAND rose amidst loud cries of "Adjourn." He wished to offer a few observations to the House, and though the question was not likely to come to an issue that night, he felt it his imperative duty to address them, in consequence of the few observations he felt it his duty to make on the first night of the Session; and he felt that he was not likely to find a more convenient opportunity than the present in order to state the reasons for the course which he intended to pursue. His opinions were unchanged; he still thought that the measures proposed by the right hon. Baronet were unnecessary; but he agreed with his hon. Friend the Member for Inverness-shire, and the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool, that it was necessary for them to look before them. It must be evident to the House and to the country, that the Corn Laws were doomed—the fatal day might, perhaps, be postponed; but if it was, he feared that the agricultural interest might not be able to find at a future period so satisfactory an adjustment as was now offered to them. A crisis had arrived, and he felt that it was for the interests of the farmers of England, as well as for the interests of the landowners of England, that this momentous question should now be finally settled as speedily as possible. He had not come to this conclusion without due consideration. He had been led somewhat hastily to give an opinion on the first night of the Session. He would not say his opinions were changed; but he wished to state his reason for the vote he was about to give. If it came to this, if the question was whether the right hon. Gentleman the First Minister of the Crown, or the Noble Lord the Member for London, was to settle this question, then he must say that he had no confidence in the noble Lord. He said it, with the greatest respect for the noble Lord, that he had no confidence in him.

He hoped he was understood to mean nothing personal; but on the other hand, he had the greatest confidence in the right hon. Gentleman the First Minister of the Crown. He said it, and he repeated it, that the right hon. Gentleman who proposed this measure did so most conscientiously, in his opinion. Taking all these considerations into mind—knowing that the question must be settled—foreseeing that it would be settled by the right hon. Gentleman—feeling that the Corn Laws must necesarily be settled, he felt constrained to vote for the proposition. [*The Noble Lord was constantly interrupted when speaking, and was only imperfectly heard.*]

Mr. FERRAND: I beg to ask the noble Lord what confidence he had in the right hon. Baronet, when he was dragged out of "the Coal-hole" to vote for him on a late occasion?

Lord NORTHLAND rose to reply, but was prevented from proceeding.

Colonel T. WOOD said, he had expressed, on the first night of the Session, his entire confidence and approbation of the measures of Her Majesty's Government, and he would now explain, as shortly as he could, the grounds of that confidence, and his reason for supporting the measures which were now before the country. He gave his support to these measures on the broad ground that they were based on the principle of free trade, which he believed to be a principle that was not only beneficial and founded in justice, but the application of which, in the various measures that came before them, would not only contribute to the general prosperity of the country, but which was absolutely and essentially necessary to the preservation of the manufacturing interest, and to the maintenance of that degree of prosperity to which they had now arrived. The hon. Member for Somersetshire, at the conclusion of his speech, had appealed to the operatives of this country to come forward and aid him and the landed interest in the maintenance of protection. But he believed that the operatives of this country, though many of their trades would be affected by the measure before the House, yet, when they saw that the application of the principle of free trade was based upon a large and general view of the good of the whole, would believe that the same measure of justice was meted out to them which was meted out to the great and governing interests of the country; and that, in consequence of this, they would acquiesce in any temporary injuries which the different trades might be subjected to. On former alterations of the Tariff he had accompanied different deputations to the Board of Trade, requesting that their interests might be protected; and he found that they all said, "Let us all be treated alike, give us an open and a free competition, and we shall not fear." Unquestionably there was justice in this statement. The market gardeners of the neighbourhood of the metropolis had not suffered by the reduction in the duties on fruit, as they anticipated, and more potatoes were grown now than before, though the duty had been reduced from 2*s.* to 1*s.* per cwt. The noble Lord the Member for the city of London had said, that if Members on his side of the House, had given him the same candid and open support which he and his party were now prepared to give to the right hon. Baronet, the question might have been easily settled before this time. Now he certainly regretted the course which he took when in Opposition, and that he did oppose the measures which were brought forward by the noble Lord. He certainly regretted that, but he regretted it still less than the course he took on the subject of Ireland, because he felt that the course he and his party took when in Opposition, they were unable to maintain now that another Government was in power. The hon. Member for North Northamptonshire, in the course of his speech, said, that protection was intended to extend not only over the industry but over the labour of the country. If the hon. Gentleman travelled into the villages of the land, or even into his own neighbourhood, he must be aware that the agricultural labourers were at present subject to an intense and increasing competition. Was it not the case that, in the neighbourhood in which he resided, there was an increasing population? Was he able to employ them? Could he explain the reason why wages in Lincolnshire were 14*s.* a week, while in Buckinghamshire they were only 8*s.* a week? It thus appeared that, in certain districts of the country, there was a superabundance of population, and no employment for them; and, unless they could increase the manufacturing prosperity of the country, what chance had they of employment? It seemed to him that the main question before the House was as to the time and the manner of making the change. Were the exigencies of the country so great in November last, or now, as to demand a change in

their commercial policy? Every Member who had addressed the House admitted that the scarcity was intense, and that being intense, they were ready to consent to the Government taking the step of opening the ports. That, he maintained, was the whole question; for if that step had been taken, and Ministers had come before Parliament asking for an indemnity, the indemnity would certainly have been granted; but would the Parliament have done their duty unless they had at the same time taken this security against future contingencies? Even if the Government had been deceived, if the scarcity was not so intense as had been apprehended, they knew that in the course of years this country was subject to deficient crops, and that then an emergency would arise. His impression was, that the supply of food in this country was not adequate to the demand, and on this ground he advocated the policy of their realizing supplies from abroad. He felt no apprehension from adopting the measures of free trade; he believed that in the long run it would prove to be beneficial to the agricultural classes themselves. The real danger to be apprehended was in the creation of a panic in the mind of the farmers, which he was sure hon. Gentlemen on the other side of the question would deprecate as much as he did. He begged pardon for having detained the House so long; but he felt convinced that the adoption of free trade would materially tend to the happiness and prosperity of this country.

Mr. S. O'BRIEN rose, not for the purpose of answering the hon. Member, but to protest against the extreme inconvenience of speaking, which had been done a second time on the main question, while professing to speak to the question of adjournment. He put it to Members of all sides of the House, whether this was not a most inconvenient practice? Mark what the consequence might be. The hon. Gentleman alluded to him: and he, though he had spoken already on the Corn Laws, might speak again on the question of adjournment, occupying the House for hours with confuting his statements, and replying to all his arguments. But he would not do so: he rose only to protest against the inconvenience of this course; the consequence of which was, that three Irish Bills, all of great importance, were now to be brought before the House, when it was already twenty minutes past twelve o'clock.

Debate adjourned till Monday.

COUNTY WORKS PRESENTMENT (IRELAND.)

House in Committee on the County Works Presentment (Ireland) Bill.

Sir J. GRAHAM moved the following Resolution:—

"Resolved—That the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury be authorized to direct advances to be made out of the Consolidated Fund of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, to an amount not exceeding 100,000*l.*, towards defraying the expense of County Works, the execution of which shall have been approved of and presented for under any Act of the present Session relating to County Works Presentments (Ireland), or which shall have been presented for by Grand Juries in Ireland."

Mr. M. O'FERRALL was of opinion that the sum was large, because, it should be remembered, the money was not to be applied for the relief of destitution in that country, but for the advancement of the public works of the kingdom. All he asked was, that the Government should put a limit to the amount that ratepayers might be called upon to pay.

Sir J. GRAHAM said, that the presence of the ratepayers with the magistrates would prove a sufficient safeguard against any misapplication of money.

Mr. WYSE inquired if the vote for 100,000*l.* was an addition to the ordinary advance contemplated by the Bill?

Sir J. GRAHAM replied that this sum was in addition.

Resolution agreed to.

House resumed, and ordered to be reported on Monday.

Adjourned at half-past One.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, February 16, 1846.

Minutes.] Public Bills.—1ª. Protection of Life (Ireland).

3ª. and passed. Turnpike Roads (Scotland); Administration of Criminal Justice.

Petitions Presented. By the Duke of Richmond, and the Earl of Stradbroke, from Owners and Occupiers of Land, of Shelley, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws, and for Protection to Agriculture.—By the Earl of Clarendon, and Earl Grey, from Portsmouth, and several other places, in favour of the Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Lord Monteagle, from Leeds, against the Reorganization of the Militia.—From Forfar, for the Equalization of the Duties on Sugar.—From Operative Paper-stainers of the City of Dublin, against the Repeal of the Duty on Paper.—From the Kirk Session of Bellie (2 Petitions), the Presbyteries of Garioch, Kincardine, and Strathbogie, in favour, and from Trustees of the Great Turnpike Road between Edinburgh and Glasgow, against, the Turnpike Roads (Scotland) Bill.

BURDENS ON LAND.

Lord BEAUMONT said: I rise pursuant to the notice I gave, for the purpose of

moving that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the peculiar burdens on real property, and the impediments to agricultural transactions caused by the present system of excise duties, poor laws, and local taxation. Although I am given to understand, that it is no longer the intention of Government to oppose this Motion, I feel that the House will expect that I should make some statement of my motives for selecting the present moment to submit so important a Motion to your Lordships, as well as some explanation of the grounds on which those with whom I generally act, have hitherto opposed similar Motions when brought forward by others. In stating my own motives, I believe I shall state the motives that influenced the conduct of those other noble Lords who are the friends of the principle of protection, and acted as I did when the question of peculiar burdens was mooted. I hold that protection to agriculture and peculiar burdens on land are so intimately connected, that you cannot entertain either of them as a separate question. You must consider them conjointly, and you can only look on this joint subject in one of the two following points of view; namely, the continuation of both, or the removal of both. You cannot retain the one, and dismiss the other; or, in other words, advocate free trade in corn, without contemplating an equalization of taxation. In support of this opinion I can quote high authorities—Mr. Ricardo and Mr. M'Culloch were of this opinion ; and, if I mistake not, my noble and learned Friend near me (Lord Brougham), in the year 1820, made a similar declaration, and then at least maintained that not only were there peculiar burdens on land, but that those peculiar burdens, as long as they remained, demanded a countervailing duty on the importation of foreign corn. Now, if the choice were fairly offered me, which of the alternatives I would prefer, I should not for a moment hesitate, but instantly declare for the continuation of both burdens and protection, instead of the removal of both. I should make this choice on general motives of great national advantages, economical considerations, and principles of justice towards some of our Colonies. I believe, that a duty on foreign corn, as a balance to the imposition of peculiar burdens, is the most economical bargain that the community at large can strike with the agriculturists. A certain sum of money is required for purposes of general policy, in which the whole community are equally interested; and it is to the advantage of all classes that the country should make an agreement with the landed interest, that they should pay this sum, on condition that in return they should be allowed a countervailing duty on the importation of foreign corn. The motives of national policy on which I would make the choice, are, the conviction that it would tend to render this country more independent of foreign States, and the belief that protection materially assists the growth of native manufactures, and extends the field of domestic industry. The colonial considerations which would influence my choice, would be the power we should then have to favour Canada and other settlements, by admitting their produce at a lower duty than grain the produce of foreign soils ; and the hope to extend by such means the intercourse and goodwill between the Colonies and the parent country. Such are my motives for preferring a continuation of the present system; but unfortunately there seems no longer much chance of the choice being any longer submitted to us ; and I must confess it is in anticipation of the probability of all protection being permanently removed, that I make the present Motion. My Motion is rather the consequence and natural sequel to a repeal of the Corn Laws, than a distinct or obstructive measure; for had I not contemplated the possibility of an early adoption of the Government proposal, I should never have thought of bringing forward the present subject. My object therefore is not delay, for I hold that a Committee on the peculiar burdens on land, would rather facilitate the consideration of the great question of protection, than tend to place difficulties or delay in the way of it. Having made these preliminary remarks, I will proceed with as much brevity as the subject will admit of, to state my views with regard to the main objects the Committee will have to take into their consideration. I find in the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on Local Taxation, twenty-four distinct rates enumerated; but those rates are merely classed as to the mode of raising them. Ten are raised on the basis of the poor rate, eight are raised on the same basis in practice but not in law; and six are raised on independent bases. From experience, however, I will state, that the whole of these various rates for various purposes are raised in the same manner as the poor rate, and, whatever the law may be, affect in practice real property alone. I wish, before I proceed further

with the subject, to adopt a new principle of classification, and make a distinction between those rates which are raised for purely local purposes, and those which have a general interest. I wish to draw a line between rates which are for objects which merely advantage those from whom they are levied, or those who live in their immediate vicinity, and such rates or taxes as are applied to general purposes, which equally affect every member of the community. By the former I mean such rates as the drainage taxes, the general sewers rate, the rural police rate, and the like, which, although very heavy in certain districts, ought to be borne exclusively by those for whose advantage the sums raised are applied. I should no more think of removing these burdens from off the shoulders of those who now pay them, than I should think of relieving the inhabitants of towns from those taxes which bore exclusively on their peculiar interest, and which they only could have any great object in maintaining. In other words, I should no more think of relieving the lands in the Bedford Level, or the marsh lands of the East Riding of Yorkshire, from their drainage taxes, than I should of relieving the inhabitants of towns from their paving, lighting, and watering rates. The objects are local, and so ought the purpose of the rate to be. What is it to the farmer in the marsh lands I have alluded to, that Exeter or Bristol are well lighted and paved? To neither of these classes of taxes—namely, the drainage rates in counties, and the paving, lighting, and watering rates in towns, will my subsequent remarks apply. My wish is, to draw attention merely to such taxes as are for general purposes, although they are levied on real property alone. Now, I hold that the maintenance of the poor, the defence of the country, and the administration of justice, are objects which equally interest all. I will not wrong the fundholder, nor will I wrong the manufacturer, nor him whose capital is embarked in mines, so far as to say that they have less bowels of compassion than the landholder or the possessor of houses. The maintenance of the poor is, and ought to be, an object alike dear and interesting to all: it is a national object, and not the peculiar interest of the holders of a peculiar sort of property; and all ought to contribute to it, as all are equally interested in it. The defence of the country is also a great national object; and if the militia is called out, it is not only to protect land and houses, but to protect all capital, whether vested in manufactures or commerce, in town or in the country. The militia rate, therefore, like the poor's rate, is raised for a general object. So with the administration of justice. The prevention of crime, the preservation of life and property, and the punishment of those who destroy either, are effects proceeding from the due administration of justice, which equally benefit the possessor of personal property as the landowner or house proprietor. If, therefore, in going through the four-and-twenty rates enumerated by the Poor Law Commissioners, I find any for the abovenamed purposes, I set them down as taxes for general purposes; and, as such, I consider that they ought to be equally borne by all classes of the community. Now, let the House consider how the poor rate and all taxes raised on the same basis affect the landowner, as compared with the possessor of all other kinds of property. The original intention of the Poor Law was not that real property alone should pay the whole of the poor rate: according to the Act of Elizabeth, every man was to be rated according to his ability to pay; but, first, because there was little but real property in the country, and next, because there was a difficulty in ascertaining the exact means of the ratepayer, the practice grew up of rating visible property alone; this practice of rating real property alone was long established before the annual Acts were passed which make the practice law. Compare, now, the working of this law as it operates on the agriculturist, and the manufacturer who embarks his capital in a mill. The capitalist would contribute to the poor rate only according to the rateable value of his mill and premises; the mill is rated as a building at its letable value: but even here a scale is adopted which is favourable to the millowner as compared with the farmer; for in many counties (Westmoreland, for instance), land is rated at the rack-rent, houses at two-thirds, and mills at only one-half. This great capitalist would collect from agricultural districts, far and near, the most able and healthy workmen he could find; and while they were strong and active, he would derive profit from the work of their arms; but when sickness came on, or trade grew slack, he could dismiss his artisans, and leave them to be supported by the parishes from which he had taken them. If he made his fortune and wished to retire, he could close his mill, pay no rates at all on it as an unoccupied building,

and throw back on the land the hundreds or thousands whom his mill had attracted from agricultural industry. Contrast this with the position of the farmer, and observe the different way in which the same law operates on different classes. The farmer has no choice: he must either employ the superabundant labourers in his parish, or pay for their maintenance in the shape of rates. He cannot increase or diminish the number of his workmen, as the work to be done on his occupation rises or falls in amount, without being subject to the countervailing operation of increased or diminished rates. In other words, he is mulcted to the amount of the labourers he discharges; and the consequence is, that in most parts of England, the farmers employ on their land, and keep in their pay, a great many more hands than the strict economical working of the farm absolutely requires. Thus the amount of actual rate paid by the farmer does not correctly represent the full amount of his contribution to the maintenance of the poor. I do not object to the mode generally adopted in respect to the relative rating of land or houses; but as some strange conclusions have been drawn from the statements made by the Poor Law Commissioners in regard of the subject, I will trouble the House with a few observations on the question. In the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, it appears that in 1826, land paid in the proportion of 69 per cent. to the rates, houses in the proportion of 26 per cent., and other property 5 per cent.; whereas in the year 1841, land paid 52 per cent., houses 37 per cent., and all other property 11 per cent. From this statement it has been argued that land had gained an undue advantage, and houses suffered an unfair injury, because the per centage paid by land had diminished, and the per centage paid by houses increased, in their relative proportions to the gross amount of contribution. There could not, however, be a more feeble argument, or a more absurd conclusion; for any man with his eyes open must perceive that such a consequence must be the inevitable result of the unprecedented increase of the number of houses, and the necessary decrease in the quantity of field-land. Every town and village that springs up, every railway and mill that is made, diminishes, to the amount of the ground they occupy, the quantity of land rated as such, and adds to the number of houses and other buildings in the rate-book. At Newcastle a whole parish has been recently covered with houses; some persons remember Brighton a fishing village; in every direction, fields are disappearing, and towns, or quarters of towns, extending. It must be observed, however, that houses are generally rated at one-third less than land. Of this, however, I do not complain, for houses are perishable property, while land remains for ever; but let the free traders take care how they use this argument on the present occasion, lest I use it with double force on the other and approaching occasion; for if they use it against land, and in favour of houses and mills, I will apply it, on a coming day, when I will ask you, if perishable property requires favour and protection, what more perishable, and, therefore, what more deserving of protection, than that great article of food which depends upon clime and season, which may be damaged in the seed or blighted in the leaf, which the thunder-storm of an hour may lay, or the frost of night cause to wither, destroying, in the course of one short day, the toil of many laborious months? It is well for me to talk of perishable property requiring special favours; but let the free trader beware how he uses it. I will now proceed to another, and what I consider the most objectionable, portion of the laws regarding the poor, I mean the Law of Settlement. I condemn that law altogether; for it is not only injurious in the extreme to the agricultural body, but it affords no corresponding benefit to the manufacturer. It is the cause of expense to the rate-payer, and the cause of annoyance to the pauper. In times of manufacturing prosperity artisans crowd to the great scenes of industry: a sudden check comes in the demand for goods (a glut in the market, or a sudden fall of price); the manufacturer can no longer afford to employ so many hands; workmen are thrown out of employment; many require relief; then begins the odious working of the law of settlement—removals, appeals, long investigations and disputes between parish and parish, during which hundreds of artisans are sent back to distant and rural districts, where they become a heavy charge on the land, and where there is no demand for the peculiar skill they have learned. After a short time, trade again revives; the manufacturers are in want of hands; the towns having removed the poor that did not belong to them, cannot supply them; the manufacturer is at once short of hands, and obliged to pay high wages; while hundreds

of artisans are chargeable in distant districts, each saying, "I know there is work to be had in Norwich or in Birmingham; but here I am at a distance (perhaps in Northumberland or Devonshire), and have no means of reconveying myself to the market where labour is again in demand. I do not want to remain idle, but your law of settlement removed me to this out-of-the-way parish when I was in distress; and here I must for ever remain a charge on the country, because I have no money to find my way back to the town where the skill I have acquired is likely to find employment." The artisan knows nothing of rural occupations, and is a dead burden to the farmer. My Lords, you may rely upon it, if you adopt free trade principles in the labour market, your first step must be to destroy the law of settlement altogether, and let the farmer hire, and the labourer seek, work in whatever market they please. You now shackle their movements, and confine their choice. The labourers are as much bondsmen to the parish as the serfs in Russia are slaves to the property. The forced migration caused by the law of removal prevents the poor from selling their labour in the dearest market, by entailing on them the expense of a journey back to the scene of their former industry. The noble Lord continued by saying that he trusted they were approaching to the end of this system, and that instead of the present law of settlement, there would be a common fund, out of which the poor man might be relieved, in whatever place he was, and thus get rid of the enormous costs of removals, appeals, trials, examinations, and the dragging of poor people and their relations from one place to another merely to prove a settlement. He had alluded to this subject, because there was reported to be an intention on the part of Government to offer as compensation to the agricultural community for the repeal of the Corn Laws an alteration in the law of settlement. Now, if that alteration were carried out on the principle of Sir James Graham's Bill of last year, it would be a total failure, when attempted to be put in practice; and he feared that if the Corn Laws were first repealed, the measure of the right hon. Baronet would be adopted. Making birth a means of obtaining settlement would lead to enormous cruelty, in forcing females likely to give birth to children, out of one parish into another, in order that their offspring might not fall to the parish from which the parents were driven; and making residence in towns for so many years a settlement would be found impracticable, and too heavy a burden on the owners of property in those towns. That measure, therefore, was no compensation whatever for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The only remedy was to get rid altogether of the law of settlement. He next came to the Highways' rate. The highways, he maintained, were for the benefit of the towns as much as of the country through which they passed; he knew, from personal experience, that the two towns at the termini of a high road were the only places to which they were of much use; they were of very little use to the intervening country. He considered, therefore, that the highway rate was a tax for general purposes. He would next allude to another subject—Tithes—which he did not consider as a burden on the cultivation of the land. He was aware that he differed from many noble Lords on this subject; and he wished to explain what he meant when he said that tithes were not a burden on the land, because he might hereafter be erroneously quoted. Previously to the commutation, tithe seriously interfered with the cultivation of land. It made some persons adopt one system of crops instead of another, and it made others not to lay out so much upon their land as they otherwise would, because they did not like that any portion of their outlay and ingenuity should be paid to another person. But from the moment tithes were commuted, they no longer interfered with the agricultural cultivation of the land. They became merely a debt upon the property. The produce of the soil brought the same in the market now to the occupier in every way as if there were no tithe upon the land. In fact they merely diminished the value of the fee-simple of the land. He must go a little further. He looked upon the land tax and tithes just like mortgages and any other charge upon property which did not interfere ~~with~~ agricultural cultivation. He did not consider them as peculiar burdens on the occupiers; and he viewed them in the same light as the direct taxation of land in France. The direct taxation on land there diminished the value of the land when you had to sell it, but it did not interfere with the agricultural cultivation. He would allude next to the latter part of his Motion, and refer to the malt tax. He knew that this tax was not supposed to be a peculiar burden on land; but that opinion he main-

tained to be erroneous. Who paid the chief of the malt tax? The consumers of beer. All the community were upon an equality in this respect, for all were consumers: therefore that portion of it which was paid by the consumer must be considered as equally weighing upon the agriculturist as upon all other classes that drank beer. But that was not all. The duty naturally diminished the consumption, and the farmer suffered in proportion to the diminished demand for barley. In addition, therefore, to the portion which he, in common with the rest of the beer-drinking community, bore of the burden, he had the peculiar loss which the duty caused by the restriction put upon the market of this kind of grain. His loss was exactly the difference there would be in the quantity of barley required without a malt tax, and the quantity now consumed with a malt duty. In many soils the farmer could, with advantage to himself, introduce barley in the rotation of crops, instead of exhausting the land by a wheat crop; but the malt duty kept down the demand for the best qualities, and rendered the seconds totally unproductive; because, if he attempted to malt the inferior barleys, for fattening purposes, and thus turn them to good account on the farm itself, the exciseman stept in, and a heavy penalty was inflicted for turning to useful purposes the produce of his own labour. In fact, by not allowing the farmer to use his barley as he liked, you placed him in the same position as you would place a manufacturer if you told him "you may manufacture cloth, but you must not wear a coat made of it." This prohibition, under fine, to use his barley, and the diminished demand for malt caused by the duty, were the peculiar burdens the land sustained in consequence of the tax. There was another excise duty, the repeal of which would be a benefit to all classes, especially to the owners of real property—he meant the excise upon bricks. It fell heavy on the possessors of town lands, and added greatly to the expense of cottages and farm repairs; and he need hardly add it caused a great loss to the proprietor whose lands contained clay particularly suited to the making of bricks. There was another excise duty which also might be considered as a peculiar burden on land, namely, the excise on hops: it was of small amount; but where it was felt it was very oppressive. Having now alluded to some of those burdens to which the land alone was subject, he would ask to what portion of the general taxation of the country did not the landowners contribute in the same proportion as all other classes of Her Majesty's subjects? Did they not contribute to the Customs the same as any other consumer? Did they not pay to the revenue of the Post-office? Were they not also taxed to the income and property tax? Did they not pay stamp duty? If he might claim the attention of his noble and learned Friend on the Woolsack, he would say that perhaps the agricultural interest had as much reason to complain of the department over which the learned Lord presided, as of any other office in the Government. In all the law reforms which the noble Lord had brought forward lately, care was taken to preserve the same liabilities to the stamp duties and legal expenses in respect to the transactions regarding real property, as existed previous to the so-called improvement in the law. When the Bill of Lease and Release was before them, the duty was carefully maintained at the same amount, so that a double duty was now paid on the single instrument. The transfers of mortgages, the transfers of land, the title-deeds, in fact every step in proceedings respecting the settlement or management of landed property, were enormously expensive and oppressive, in consequence of the clumsy laws and high duties respecting them. An attempt had been made to alter the law touching the transfer of real property; but only increased confusion followed, and the result was that on the purchase of the smallest quantities of land your attorney continues to hand you in a bill of three or four pages for the cost of the most simple transaction. What had been done for the due registration of deeds? In no country in Europe was less convenience and facility afforded for the purshasing of land, or the transfering of mortgages; and when he compared the difficulties in this country with the facilities in France, he must denounce our system in this respect as a blot and a stain on the Legislature. His noble Friend had added, or intended to add, by way of Amendment to the present Motion, an instruction to the Committee to inquire into the exemptions to taxation afforded by the Legislature to landed property. He (Lord Beaumont) had no objections to the Amendment. He thought the number of exemptions from the taxes imposed on other parties very small; it was almost confined to the legacy and probate duty. That was evidently a case in point: personal pro-

perty had a right to complain of the inquality of the tax, and the sooner the law was revised the better. Certain articles also of an agricultural nature—dead stock, were exempt from the duty on insurance; but those articles were from their very nature constantly exposed to injury, and the insurance on them was consequently high. A painful circumstance had also increased enormously the risk and danger agricultural stock was exposed to; and it was in consequence of that additional risk that the difficulty of insuring the property arose. I allude (the noble Lord continued) with pain and regret to the violent and exciting language addressed to the labouring population by the emissaries of an agitating club, and although I am certain their employers would not authorize such language as their hired orators adopted; and though I would fain believe that the speakers themselves were ignorant of the consequence of their declamation, I cannot conceal from myself the positive fact, that destruction to exposed agricultural property has often followed close on the public meetings where such violent language has been used. I have no objection to strong language in debate; I am not very sensitive when hard names are showered down on the heads of landlords and farmers; I, perhaps, sometimes myself employ expressions which can scarcely be called very mild; but when words are uttered tending to excite a passion for revenge and destruction in the minds of an ignorant audience, I think I can scarcely be too loud in condemning such an abuse of the right to discuss a great public question. Returning to the subject before the House (the noble Lord continued by saying), he had heard of certain intended measures being put forward by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, as a compensation to the land for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Now, he (Lord Beaumont) contended that the proposed measures could, under no circumstances, be considered as a compensation; and even if a real compensation were thought of, how could they overcome the difficulty of exactly estimating the amount of the loss, on the one hand, to which the compensation, on the other, must be adjusted? The exact amount of protection about to be taken away, was the precise difference between the price a farmer would receive for his produce under a free-trade system, and that he received under a protecting law. The loss thus estimated was to regulate the diminution of taxation; but the most ingenious calculator in the world could not ascertain the exact sum, in the first place, on which the whole of the operation was to be based. Compensation on a just principle was impossible; and, perhaps, his noble and learned Friend had suggested a more practicable inquiry when he said, that the true way of trying the question was to see how the English farmer would be enabled to stand competition with the foreign one. When the time come to enter upon that part of the subject, he (Lord Beaumont) would be prepared to go into it at length. He had seen some strange statements made as to the relative portions of taxation land in England and land abroad bore. The only burden land in France bore was the direct taxes; and those, if valued per acre, were not half what the land in England paid. The occupier was subject to no indirect taxation for the land he cultivated; and, therefore, according to the theory of those who held tithes and land tax to be no burden on the occupation of land in England, the French farmer was totally exempt from all burdens in the cultivation of his land. In most of the German States the direct taxation on land was, to the acre, much less, again, than in France; and when you extend your views to Southern Russia and the Turkish Provinces, the whole taxation, per acre, was as 2 to 100 when compared with the acre of English soil: so that if you try the question by the test of competition, you must come to the conclusion that the producing agriculturist is taxed to double, at least, of any farmer on the continent of Europe. There are (continued the noble Lord) several other smaller indirect burdens to which I should have called the attention of the House, if I had not the prospect of obtaining a Committee. Before I sit down, however, I would fain say a word with regard to my own conduct on this subject. I have invariably clung to the system of protection, for the reasons I have so often stated to the House; but I distinctly say now, that if well-attested public opinion should declare itself constitutionally to be against the continued maintenance of that system of protection, I shall not turn round in a sulky humour, and try to increase the evils of a law carried against my opinion; but on the contrary, submit in good will to what will then be the adopted measure of the Legislature, and try to palliate the misfortune, rather than exaggerate the evil consequences which I firmly believe will inevitably follow so ill-advised an enact-

ment. In other words, I will attempt to pacify rather than to agitate. Such is the course I myself am ready to take; and I trust all those, my noble Friends, who think with me on this important subject, will also exert their great and powerful influence to prevent an evil greater than even that against which we are struggling, namely, the evil of raising class against class, and keeping up the invidious distinction between manufacturers and farmers. I have never joined in the abuse heaped upon the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government. I believe his statements regarding the change in his opinions; and I conclude that he is under the delusion that he is at present acting for the best. I respect his sincerity, and I admire his courage; but this I will say, if he carries this measure in this present Parliament, it will not be the triumph of opinion, but the consequence of a confusion amongst political parties. If he triumphs, he will triumph over public opinion, because he will then have carried his measure against the opinion of the country, as declared at the last general election; he will carry it against the opinion of the House of Commons, as declared in many divisions; he will carry it against the opinion of the House of Lords, as also declared by numerous divisions; and, above all, he will carry it against the opinion of the majority of his own Cabinet, as made known to us by recent explanations. I have said that I would submit to the consequences of the victory in good will, if that victory is gained by the force of public opinion. Let the Government, therefore, look to it; let them appeal to the country, and obtain, if they can, an expression of public opinion in their favour. Let them follow up the expression of public opinion out of doors by securing the opinion of the majority in the House of Commons, and I then should doubt the propriety of this House offering a continued opposition to the measure. If this be done, the measure, however much we may condemn it, will have gained in a constitutional manner the sanction of the Legislature; but, as it now stands, it can only be carried by an able, but scarcely justifiable, manœuvre of party politics.

LORD BROUGHAM rose and said he wished to second the Motion. [A noble LORD: That is contrary to order.] No, indeed, it was not (continued the noble Lord); for the Addresses to the Throne in that House, were uniformly seconded.

The MARQUESS of LANSDOWNE said, an Address was moved by a noble Lord, and was then put by the Lord Chancellor. There was no necessity to second the Motion.

The LORD CHANCELLOR then put the Question, and

LORD BROUGHAM said, he merely wished to state, in answer to an appeal made to him personally by the noble Lord, that the opinions on land burdens he entertained in 1820—on the subject to which the Motion referred—had not undergone any change. He admitted the full extent of those burdens which fell exclusively and peculiarly upon the land, and he was ready to go a great deal further than his noble Friend. He was far from concurring in the views of the noble Lord with respect to tithes; and certainly he did not agree with the opinions he had expressed relative to the land tax. He had never in his life been more astonished than he was by the admission of his noble Friend, that the land tax was not a peculiar burden on land. Why, then, was the poor rate a peculiar burden? Was the house tax a burden upon houses? "Not at all," said his noble Friend, or at least in consistency he ought to say, "because, when you buy a house, and reckon what you get as an investment by the interest of your money, you calculate justly a deduction for the house tax." And that was precisely the argument with respect to tithe. He wished to avoid entering into the subject that night, because there was no opposition to the Motion; and if he were to follow his noble Friend through the whole question, some noble Lord might say, "What are you going to inquire about in Committee? You have settled the question in the House." He (Lord Brougham) would reserve the subject for the consideration of the Committee; he would not bring with him there a foregone conclusion; he was ready to go into Committee, and he would do so maintaining the same opinions he held in 1820 and 1822 as to the burdens upon land, and holding them until the inquiry should change them. He differed with his noble Friend further in considering those burdens more oppressive and objectionable than he (Lord Beaumont) did in some important particulars; and he did not agree with the noble Lord in the opinion that the proper mode of compensating the landowner was by taxing corn, and prohibiting foreign importations. He regretted that the noble Lord had commenced his

observations by attacking the measures of the Government, and anticipating the debate which must ere long take place in their Lordships' House, on the Ministerial proposition. It was a most inconvenient course for noble Lords to snatch at an opportunity of raising a debate on a question which, naturally and regularly, would not come before their Lordships till the measure was sent up from the other House. He (Lord Brougham) would, therefore, purposely abstain from entering into any part of the discussion, further than to express his regret that that inquiry would not extend to what he viewed as perhaps the greatest of all the burdens which fell exclusively upon land—to the circumstance that the landowner and the farmer, who were in this respect in a different position from all other employers of capital, had not the power of going into the labour market for the cheapest and the best labour they could obtain. A manufacturer had no patriarchal relations with his workmen. A manufacturer turned off in a day the men who had been in his employment for one, two, or perhaps for ten years, or who might have been employed by his predecessor for a still longer period; he sent them away without any pensions when he could get able-bodied men to serve him better than they did. Not so the landowner; and he had no doubt that some of his noble Friends on the cross benches could tell the House that under the patriarchal system of the rural districts, one-half the labourers they employed had been in their service or that of their families for a long course of years, and that they could get the same quantity of work done by eighty men, for which they were now compelled to employ a hundred and sixty. He mentioned these figures, because they were the returns which a noble Friend of his gave him, to whom he had been speaking on the subject. It was not merely for the purpose of preventing the workman from being thrown upon the poor rates that landholders acted in this manner; but in consequence of the peculiar relationship in which, as he had just stated, the parties stood towards each other. There was no one could feel stronger than he did on this subject; but he would not refer to it at present, farther than to observe, that there was this very material difference between landowners and other capitalists with regard to their position in the labour market. Allusion had been made to the legacy duty; but the landholder or the farmer was obliged, the moment his predecessor died, to pay the legacy duty on all his personal property as well as other parties. He was also, as the noble Lord had remarked, obliged to pay Customs' duties and all other burdens to which the rest of the community were subjected; in addition to which he had to pay the peculiar burdens to which the land was subjected. Thus, while all the community, the landowners included, paid personal taxes—all the community, the landowners excluded, did not sustain the land burdens. Thus, landowners having personalty, paid legacy and probate duty; every landowner consuming excisable and customable goods paid excise or customs. But the rest of the community paying taxes, probate, excise, or customs, had no land, and paid no tithes, no land tax, no county rate, no poor rate. Such was the difference in the landowners' position. Before he concluded, he would wish to offer one remark on the subject of stamp duties. His noble Friend had been quite mistaken in charging his noble and learned Friend on the Woolsack with being accountable for the alteration in the law respecting deeds. He (Lord Brougham) would admit that he was himself answerable for any blame, if blame could be attached, that arose from this change; but he would say that there never was a greater mistake than to suppose the landholder was in a worse position now than he had been before that change with regard to the payment of stamp duties. There never was a greater error than to suppose that the late great and important improvements made in the law had not been beneficial to the landowner. What did his noble Friend think of the Act for the Abolition of Fines and Recoveries? He knew one landowner who abstained from suffering recoveries till the Bill of 1833 passed, and to whom that measure saved 5,000*l.* or 6,000*l.* His noble Friend had referred to the Act for Amending the Law relating to the Transfer of Real Property, and had said that nobody understood that measure. Why, everybody understood it. [Lord Kinnaird: That Act was not used.] It was a measure on which all practitioners were now acting; and it was only the fault of those who employed those practitioners if it was not acted upon, for the Act contained a clause preventing practitioners from obtaining a higher remuneration by using longer forms. Leases might now be drawn on half a sheet of paper, or half a skin of parchment, which would formerly have occupied ten sheets of paper, or the same quantity of parchment. He was clearly

of opinion that the landowners had a right to complain of the stamp duties. The Spanish Government had formerly adopted a most injudicious tax, the alcavala, a duty paid on all sales of goods even in open market—the worst tax ever contrived. In this country the land was subject to precisely the same abominable tax. The stamp duty prevented the sale or mortgage of an acre of land without the payment of a heavy duty; and its effect was to place the debtor at the mercy of the mortgagee, his creditor, who said, "If you don't raise my interest, you shall pay 10,000*l.* or 12,000*l.*, for conveyancing, and change your security." He (Lord Brougham) hoped no long time would elapse before taxation was thrown upon succession to, instead of on the alienation of land, and a greater relief to the landowner could not be desired.

Lord DACRE said, he wished to be clearly understood in the meaning which he attached to protection. He conceived protection to mean some particular application of capital, either for the encouragement of home trade, or the advancement of some particular class, the prosperity of which was thought to be of great advantage to the community at large. Considering the vast progress that had been made in trade and commerce, and the great progress which, according to statistical proofs, had taken place in the employment of capital, he could not but feel that protection of any kind was an unnatural application of wealth, and that with regard to the cultivation of the soil, it ought to be completely rejected. But the level of taxation had been disturbed by protection—disturbed beyond reason, beyond bounds, and beyond pretence. He would not then refer to some returns which would no doubt be brought before the Committee, and which many of their Lordships had, no doubt, already looked into. He rejected some of the items of pressure of which the agriculturists complained; but he at the same time felt that they were subjected to one of the most severe and grinding property taxes that was ever imposed on any country, in the shape of the poor rates. He was prepared to show that the remission of many taxes imposed on landed proprietors and tenant-farmers would be no more than the equalization of taxation; and for his part he was convinced that the agriculture of this country was in a condition to meet the agriculture of the world without protection, if they were only granted the advantage of equal taxation, and if they had the free application of labour, and a free disposal of the produce of that labour. There had been returns printed for the purpose of ascertaining the rateable value of propriety prior to the imposition of the income tax in 1842. The valuation for the poor rates amounted to 48,400,000*l.*, while the property tax had been paid on one hundred and eighty odd millions, exclusive of the incomes below 150*l.* a year, which were not charged, though the poor rates were levied on the poorest cottiers. He felt, therefore, justified in saying that the value of property in this country was not lower than 200,000,000*l.*, including the incomes under 150*l.*, and that fully three-fourths of this amount was not subjected to the poor rates, which thus fell most heavily on the landed interest. Personal property and stock in trade were exempted from these rates, on the pretence that they were not competent to meet the demand. But it was not from any incompetency to meet the payment of a tax that this great proportion of the property of the country claimed to be exempted. Did they not see hundreds of thousands of pounds subscribed by some of these very interests to establish a combination which, in his opinion, was most unconstitutional? Was it not unconstitutional to raise an immense fund, and employ it in attempting to control the liberty of election, and to convert the counties into nomination counties for particular parties; and that, too, after the stringent and complete reform lately granted, and under which the promoters of this scheme must be aware they owed much of their rights, and the very elective franchises which were thus abused. He hoped those individuals would not attempt to resist such legislative measures as might require them to contribute their fair quota to the taxation of the country. With reference to the subject of the malt duty, he found that there had been no increasd consumption of that article, in proportion to the increased population, for many years past; and the farmers were unable to use malt without payment of a tax of 30 per cent. He conceived it was equitable that, having ascertained the burdens upon real property, they might, by some partial remission of taxation, make an arrangement that would be just and fair and satisfactory to all parties; but if they entirely repealed the Corn Laws, land would then be specially burdened, for English wheat was taxed 12 per cent. in comparison with foreign wheat. He would not, however, enter further into the question than to express his anxious hope that the Committee being granted,

they would enter into the minute details of the subject, with a view to equal taxation and freedom of capital in case of the adoption of free trade. An allusion had been made the other night, in another place, to something that he was supposed to have said, namely, that he was for protection for corn, but for nothing else. He denied that he had ever said anything of the kind, or had made use of any language which would justify such a supposition. He could not sit down without expressing his great anxiety as to the danger to the Constitution by the proceedings out of doors. He wished to speak with all respect of one of those who were, if he might so call them, the tribunes of the people, and to whom he had every inclination to show respect; but he could not help saying, that whatever doubt there might be as to the legality of the combination, he thought the word "conspiracy" could not be ill applied, when they knew the objects entertained by one of these gentlemen. A conspiracy might exist for an object not avowed, and might be promoted by means apparently legal; but when the object was avowed, even though it appeared to be legal, he would submit it to any learned Lord whether it were not possible for a conspiracy for attaining such object to be shown by the deliberate expressions of one who was amongst its chief supporters. He had, then, a speech which was delivered at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 17th of December last, and which appeared in *The Times* of the following day, and he had taken some trouble to ascertain that the report was correct, in which the speaker (Mr. Bright) concluded by saying—

"He did hope that the people would bear in mind how great a panic had been created by the very name of those 40*s.* freeholders. That small weapon, which had been hidden in the Reform Act, and in the old Constitution, would lay the hereditary peerage in the dust."

Now, having said this, he would only add, that he should be grieved by imagining that any Minister of this country would allow Parliament to separate without introducing some measure to connect residence with a right of voting in counties as well as in boroughs; and he said that as an old reformer remembering the effect of the 40*s.* freeholders in Ireland, and the repugnance there was to put an end to them, but that that repugnance was overcome by the apparent necessity of the case. In conclusion, he must beg their Lordships' pardon for having occupied so much of their time.

Lord MONTEAGLE said, that from the turn the debate had taken, he believed there would be no objection to the Amendment he had to propose—

"That after the words, 'That a Select Committee be appointed to consider the Burdens on Real Property,' the following words be added to the Motion of the noble Lord, viz.:—'And also to inquire into and to report on the Legislative Exemptions and pecuniary Advantages provided by Law in respect to Taxation as affecting Landed Property, and the Impediments to Agricultural Transactions, caused by the present System of Excise Duties, Poor Laws, and Local Taxation.'"

The practical object of the Amendment was, that as they were invited to go into this inquiry, it might be made an impartial one, and that it might thus be rendered effectual for all legislative purposes; for if they intended this inquiry to produce any effect upon public opinion, it should include everything. He should have ended here, and would not have troubled the House with any further remarks, as there was to be no opposition offered to his Motion; but he should be sorry to be supposed from his silence to acquiesce in some doctrines which had been laid down that evening, and against which he wished to make his earliest protest. They had heard from his noble Friend the Mover, as might have been anticipated, a most candid and fair series of admissions upon this subject. Of these the most important by far was made upon the subject of tithes: he admitted that tithes ought not to be considered a burden on production. Upon that most material point, his noble Friend had allowed that, subsequently to the commutation of tithes, the tithe-rent did not differ from any other kind of rent, and therefore it could furnish no ground for defending protection on land; unless indeed his noble Friend meant to maintain that most dangerous of all arguments, that protection was to be maintained, as he (Lord Monteagle) knew it to be considered by some of its strongest advocates, maintained, not for the benefit of the community at large, but for the protection of rent only. But he should like to find any writer or reasoner venturing to draw a distinction between 25*s.* paid to the landlord for land tithe free, and 20*s.* paid to the landlord, together with 5*s.* to the tithe-owner. These two cases were identical; and if his noble Friend asserted that the tithe rent augmented the cost of production, why he must admit also that common rent did the same thing; and parties getting up a clamour against rent might justify their agitation by saying, that by the abolition of rent they could diminish the cost of pro-

ducing grain in this country. He denied that either the commutation of the tithes payable as a rent to the clergy, or the rent payable to the landlord, was in any respect the cause of price—it was the offspring of price, not the cause of it; and if they did not maintain that doctrine in respect to rent, greater danger would arise with respect to the rights of property in this country than in any other way. He therefore denied that tithe could ever be held a special burden on land: it was merely a joint ownership in the property. If the object was to produce equality of taxation, the fair, just, and impartial mode of effecting it was to remove the inequality, not to create a protection. But in respect to the poor rates, he must say, in passing, that, if the proposed mode of meeting that inequality was to transfer the rates, either wholly or in part, to the State, instead of leaving them a local charge, that proposition was infinitely more dangerous than any inconvenience arising out of the present mode of assessment; because, in so doing, they would deprive themselves, the administrators of the Poor Law, and the poor, of the check which the locality of the charge produced over the rates. But the unequal pressure of the poor's rate on land was gradually diminishing. From the return which he held in his hand, he found that in the period from 1826 to 1841, the relative pressure of rates on land and other property, had changed very much, and that the change was all for the benefit of the land. The House should be aware of the extent to which rating had gone with respect to the last description of property that had been created amongst them. He alluded to railways, which contributed thousands and tens of thousands to rates. In some parishes the poor rates were nearly all paid by the railways. But to return to the complaint of unequal amount. If property was not assessed fairly, let the mode of assessment be altered; but he entreated their Lordships never for a moment to entertain the possibility of making the poor rates of this country a general and State tax. He was bound to admit, that either under the original law of Elizabeth, or by subsequent Statutes, there were certain descriptions of property originally proposed to be taxed that were now exempt from such taxation. Of this, personal profits on stock were an instance. These exemptions, now sanctioned by the Legislature, had arisen from various difficulties which stood in the way of assessing particular property; and the noble Duke on the cross bench, who had Scotch as well as English experience, would not, he believed, contradict him when he said that the principle of assessment which was known as the Scotch system of "means and substance," had been one of the most complicated schemes that could be applied to any assessment, general or local: it was a species of property tax, reaching the lowest descriptions of property, without the checks and exemptions which rendered a property tax more tolerable. Yet such a remedy as this was looked for by some to produce equality of assessment. With regard to the expense of the administration of justice, as far as regarded criminal prosecutions, it must be remembered that half the cost of the prosecutions was already borne by the State. But if they made the whole chargeable in that way, it would be necessary, at the same time, to make some essential changes in the system at present existing. There must be something like a public prosecutor appointed in each county, by, and under the control of, the Government; for it would not be very prudent for one party to undertake supplying the funds for the expense of prosecution, whilst another party was allowed to administer them. He could not shut his eyes to the circumstance that the undertaking by the Government of the whole charge of criminal prosecutions would lead to large alterations in our criminal system, some of which, he thought, however, would be equally wise and beneficial. There was another subject to which he must refer, and that was the duty on malt. His noble Friend said, that the malt tax was paid in the first instance by the consumer, but that it ultimately fell on the land. He doubted the latter proposition, without many qualifications. He agreed that this tax in its operation might lessen the consumption of the article. So far as the tax checked consumption, it was a burden on land; but how had this article been already dealt with by Parliament? He believed, that of all articles that were made a source of revenue, malt had participated to the largest extent in the remission of taxation granted since the close of the war. Up to the Government of the noble Duke, in 1830, they had a beer duty. In 1816, malt was also subject to a war tax. The result was, that these two duties now repealed were equal to a charge of 43*s.* per quarter on the barley consumed as malt. The present tax was 20*s.* 8*d.*; so that, in

point of fact, at the present moment, two-thirds of the original duty were remitted. Where had there been given such a large remission on any other similar article? And he doubted extremely, speaking practically, if the state of the revenue admitted it—which it did not—whether the effect of the entire remission would be very much felt. The malt duty, though always charged by anticipation, was accompanied by a credit of three or six months given to the maltster for the payment of the duty; the consequence was, that the maltster sold rapidly, not only receiving the price of his malt, but the amount of the duty which he had not yet paid, and he was enabled to go into the market as a purchaser of barley, with a capital formed partly of the public money, which enabled him to give a better price for the article he purchased; and he (Lord Monteagle) believed, that if the agriculturists of England could obtain the entire remission of the malt duty, as there would be a clear necessity of making up the deficiency of revenue in some other way, they would soon find they could not have that amount imposed in any mode less burdensome than the present malt tax. The agriculturists, in relation to malt and barley, enjoyed certain privileges, which, were the malt tax abolished, they could not hope to keep. Although the tax was, in point of fact, paid mostly by the consumer, and not by the agriculturist, the agriculturists were allowed a close monopoly in respect to all breweries and distilleries in this country; and no sugar or molasses could be used as a substitute for malt, nor could any other product, even of our own Colonies, be so used in the process of those manufactures, lest it should injure the agricultural interests. This prohibition, therefore, was entirely for the benefit of the English barley grower. If they compared these advantages with the restrictions on the growth of barley produced by the pecuniary amount of the malt tax, it would be found that the farmers had little or nothing to complain of. The noble Lord said, in the second place, that the restrictions of the Excise laws prevented the farmers from using malt for the purposes of agriculture. He did not think they sustained any such great loss by those Excise prohibitions. Under certain regulations, farmers were entitled to turn barley to account for feeding purposes. They might grind or soak barley; they might allow it to shoot or germinate: kiln drying, alone, was forbidden. This restriction was said to be severe; but, at the same time, they had the result before them of scientific inquiries made by men above all suspicion—Mr. Playfair and Mr. Graham, who reported that, for the purpose of fattening, it was injurious to turn barley into malt. In addition to this testimony of science, there was, however, one conclusive fact bearing on this subject: in Germany, there was no tax on malt, there existed no prohibition to its use for agricultural purposes; yet it was stated by Professor Liebig, that the Germans, being perfectly at liberty to do what they pleased with their barley, did not use it in the malted state for the purpose of fattening cattle. With respect to the exemption of the land from the payment of probate and legacy duties, he thought the advantage the land enjoyed in this respect much exaggerated; but he believed the exemptions in favour of freehold property to be objectionable, even though they had not the full pressure and unfairness they seemed to have. The land paid an enormous duty on transfer by sale; and though it was exempted from duty in transmission by death, the public had no right to consider that exemption without taking also into their consideration the taxation to which land was subject in other forms. At the same time, they could not be considered as leaving the subject on a right footing if they merely left one inequality to remedy another. When Mr. Pitt first introduced the Bill for levying the probate and legacy duties, he proposed to render landed property as well as personal property subject to the tax: that measure was not absolutely rejected by the Commons, but, as it was only carried by the casting vote of the Speaker, it was given up by the Minister, and the present inequality was thus produced. Though this inequality were not so great as it appeared, it was an inequality still, and a very fit subject for inquiry. But were there no other exemptions in favour of land? If noble Lords would look at the whole financial arrangements since 1816, they would find an uniform desire on the part of those who had managed the finances of this country to consider, perhaps to overrate, the claims of the agricultural body to relief. They had an exemption from duty for their horses, for certain windows, and agricultural servants—[The Duke of RICHMOND: And for their shepherds' dogs.] Possibly the exemption from the duty on draining tiles might be undervalued and laughed at also; the truth was, that everything was a grievance till it was redressed, and the moment it was redressed,

the very relief afforded was converted into an argument and treated as an insult on account of its insignificance. But to return to these greater measures: hundreds of thousands had been taken off from the duties on farm horses, on farm servants, and on agricultural produce of various kinds. What was the reason given for the repeal of the auction duties last year? He and his noble Friend had opposed that repeal; but what was the reason assigned? That the auction duties were so full of exemptions that it was impossible to keep up this tattered remnant of a tax. Nine-tenths of those exemptions were made in favour of the agricultural interests. He would not then talk of the balance between burdens and privileges: it would be for the Committee to settle that balance; and he would support the appointment of such a Committee, moved for as it was, not as any impediment to the progress of any measure likely to come before the House, but, *alio intuitu*, to determine whether the present was a fair and equal mode of levying the public revenue, and of apportioning the public burdens. With regard to the observations just made by his noble Friend behind him in reference to the League, he must remark that he (Lord Monteagle) had never belonged to the League, and that he did not like either that or any other irresponsible body exercising a very wide influence, and not recognised by the law of the land; and for whose acts and language all might be held responsible, although not personally cognizant of what was done. He was not disposed to be so chivalrous as the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond), who was willing to endorse all the acts of a society of a very different kind, past, present, and to come. But what had the League to do with the matter in hand? It had been said that the League and Leaguers ought to abstain from replying to or noticing speeches made elsewhere, and which they had not themselves heard; but this rule, which was a good one, ought to be equally applied in all cases. He wished to see the League cease; and he believed that the promoters of the League were just the men of all others in this country who were most eager that the cause for the existence of the League should cease. He believed that Parliament, by pursuing a wise course of legislation, would soon produce the extinction of the League; and for this reason, as well as upon every other ground, he rejoiced at the course which Her Majesty's Government had taken. The noble Lord concluded by moving the Amendment.

The EARL of ESSEX believed, that any measure which would tend to induce the farmers to keep more stock would be a benefit to the country, as it would enable more corn to be grown, and to be sold at a lower price.

LORD STANLEY would not have trespassed for one moment upon their Lordships' attention on that occasion, if he were not desirous to enter his counter-protest against the protest of his noble Friend, as to tithe not being to be looked upon in the nature of a burden upon land. He thought that his noble Friend had good reason for not complaining of the noble Lord who had introduced this Motion; for he (Lord Stanley) considered that he had somewhat overstated his admissions in the plenitude of his candour; for he agreed with his noble and learned Friend who had just left the House (Lord Brougham), that the land-tax and tithes were burdens upon land, in the sense in which they were now taking burdens; and that in throwing them away the noble Lord threw away almost the strongest part of his case. With regard to tithe, let him not be misunderstood as stating that the claims of the tithe-owner to the tithes was not as sacred, as high, and as indefeasible, as the right of the landowner in the property of the soil; and he admitted that an individual who purchased property in land bought it subject to the tithe, and paid less for it on account of its being so subject. The purchaser, in his individual capacity, had no right to complain of the burden of tithes, because he had paid so much less for his property in consequence of their existence. But the question on which he entirely differed from his noble Friend, and on which he protested against going into Committee as a foregone conclusion, was this—that tithes and rent, as burdens on land, stood on the same or a similar footing. The noble Lord had looked upon tithe and rent as identical in their nature, and had said that rent was the consequence of the price of corn, and not an element in that price. That might be true with regard to rent, but it was not true with regard to tithe. And there was this distinction: rent was a surplus above the produce of the soil, and a payment out of the capital and profit; but tithe was that which was paid in the first instance before a farmer derived a profit, or the capitalist an income, or the landlord his rent. If the cultivation of the land became unprofitable

for the farmer, the rent of the landlord fell in proportion; but let the cultivation be ever so unprofitable, the claim of the tithe-owner—and even more so since the commutation which had been referred to—was not in the least diminished; and as it was not diminished, it had to be added to the price actually paid for the production of the corn: and as a lower price of corn and inferior value of the article produced did not at the same time lower the amount of the original charge, that charge was still to be defrayed, and must enter into the cost of the produced article. He therefore did not agree with his noble Friend, that tithes did not add to the cost of producing corn; but he would further explain his reason by a plain illustration. Let him assume that a mill was built in a certain town, and that by some law a condition was imposed upon the owner of the mill that he should give to some one else one-tenth of every piece of cotton produced in that mill, either to be made as a payment to the State, or for some other purpose. It would be no answer to say, that the original proprietor of the mill had sold it to another person, and that this other person bought it knowing that it was subject to this payment. That was not the question: the question was, whether this burden did not add to the cost of production at that mill? It would be said then, that if the mill were liable to pay one-tenth of every piece produced in the shape of taxation, ultimately the article would be increased in price, and the consumer would have to pay that advanced price. That would be true so long as the owner of the mill had a monopoly, or so long as all other mills were in the same condition; but if there were another mill in the town, the owner of which was exempt from the payment of the one-tenth to which the owner of the first mill was subject, would any one tell him that the owners of the first and second mills could compete on equal terms, and could afford to sell the same article at the same price, and at the same profits? Let them take this, then, as the case of their own producers of corn as against foreign rivals. They were about to inquire whether this were a burden as such, not as against other producers here, but as against the foreigners in the same articles in which they dealt. He would like to compare this case of the manufacturers, and take the case of two stacks, one raised from the land, which before a spade was put in, or rather before the produce was realized—before the labourer received his pay, the tenant his profits, and the landlord his rent—was subject to the burden of paying one-tenth of its produce, and the other stack capable of being brought to market subject to no such payment or condition; and he would ask whether these two stacks came into the market under equal conditions, and whether the actual cost price of the corn in the one case was not greater than the actual cost of the other? The one was burdened with an obligation imposed, not for the exclusive benefit of the class upon whom it was imposed, but for the general benefit of the whole community, for public purposes, and for an object which they all profited by. He would ask, if the one stack of corn were subjected to this burden, and the other had not to bear it, whether the one which was thus burdened had not a right to ask, for the purposes of fair competition, and not of monopoly or exclusiveness, to be enabled to start on fair terms with its rival, and to seek of their Lordships protection in some shape or other? His noble Friend (Lord Monteagle) indeed said, "Oh, that was all very true before the commutation of the tithes, but now it is no burden, because it is not now proportioned to the produce." Let him (Lord Stanley) return to the case of the mills. His noble Friend would admit, that if the tithe were paid in kind by one mill, and nothing by the other, they were not upon equal terms. Well, a commutation took place. The owner, seeing the amount of the burden, said, "I don't wish to have my industry interfered with in proportion to my energy and skill. I will therefore commute, and, taking the average of the amount I have produced in the past five years, and the average also of the price at which I sold my commodity, I will pay you down a money price as a compensation for the per centage you receive of my produce." What difference did that make? If the commutation were fair and equal, the payment would be as much a burden when it was paid in the shape of a definite sum as when it was paid as a proportion of the produce. But if by any legislative act after the agreement for that commutation, the legislature lowered the price of the article produced, and yet insisted that the producer should pay the same amount for his commutation, it was something beyond a paradox for his noble Friend to say it ceased to be a burden; for in its new shape it was an increased and additional burden. He trusted their Lordships would excuse him, therefore, in entering his protest

against the opinion expressed by his noble Friend. He rejoiced that Her Majesty's Ministers did not offer any opposition to the present Motion: he rejoiced that this question would be fairly, fully, and impartially considered; he rejoiced that the report of the Committee, and the facts on which it was founded, would be laid before their Lordships and the country; and he cordially rejoiced that his noble Friend had brought forward this Motion, and that it had been acquiesced in by their Lordships. He could not go into Committee, however, without protesting against one proposition made by the noble Lord, who said he moved for this Committee, because he considered the question of the abolition of protection already settled. [*Cheers.*] He concurred with the noble Lord who cheered in thinking that on this and upon any other question, the opinion and the wishes of the country calmly, deliberately, and seriously expressed, and steadily maintained, would, and must have, and ought to have, great influence upon the decision of their Lordships and of the other House of Parliament; and he also agreed with the noble Lord in thinking that there could be no doubt that on a subject of such vast importance, the sense of the country as well as of the Parliament should be taken; and that unless that sense should be clearly, unequivocally, and deliberately in favour of this change, a change so immeasurably great—nay, more, that unless it were accomplished with this opinion in its favour, instead of being an undoubted good, it could not fail to be an undoubted evil. He agreed also with the noble Lord, that if the question of protection were disposed of, and if that protection which had been hitherto given to agriculture should be withdrawn, those who were interested in agriculture would have a fair and reasonable claim for such compensation as it would be in the power of the Parliament to adjudge to them; but he protested against being supposed to argue that the question of the policy of the Corn Laws rested on—more than in the slightest degree—the individual interests of any body of men. Let them even prove to him that the landlords and the farmers had received, or would receive, the fullest compensation for their individual and pecuniary interests, they would not have settled in his mind the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws. He would not then enter upon the question of those laws, but he wished to record his firm opinion, that the question of the maintenance or abolition of the Corn Laws rested upon something far above the individual interests of the agriculturists or of any other class in the community. That question must be weighed not by any pecuniary consideration, which was the lowest point, but by the effect which the maintenance or the abolition of these laws would have upon the great social, moral, and political interests of the whole community.

The Duke of RICHMOND would enter a similar protest to that of his noble Friend. He, like the noble Lord, could not consider the question of the abolition of the Corn Laws settled; because he would not believe, until the Bill should be brought up into that House, that Members of the House of Commons would be sufficiently daring to pass a Bill so contrary to every pledge they had given to their constituents on the hustings. Till the measure, therefore, did come up there, he would not express so bad an opinion of those Gentlemen. But let them suppose that it did come up to that House, still he did not believe that their Lordships would make such sudden turns; but that they would force the Government to appeal to the country for an expression of the public opinion. It was all very well to say that there was very great excitement out of doors upon the subject; if there were, he should like to know who were the authors of that excitement? Was it not owing to the exertions of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and the alarm which the Prime Minister took at what they were doing? He believed that his noble Friend, as he had declared, if this measure should become the law of the land, would do his best to allay the excitement, and to prevent class from being arrayed against class; but he (the Duke of Richmond) would be deceiving their Lordships were he to hold out to them the slightest hope, that if they did pass this measure, this excitement would cease. They must remember that the yeomanry of England, the enlightened, the honest, and the independent yeomanry, had, up to a very late moment, placed their whole faith in the leader whom they had themselves chosen; they had thought that he never would betray them, as they never would have deserted him. With such feelings on their minds, with a feeling of the deep injury which they were likely to sustain; and with the feeling also that their families and themselves were to be consigned to ruin and the workhouse—with an entire loss of confidence in public men—could they believe, that with such

feelings, these honest farmers, who had heard public men on the hustings declare that they were for protection, and protection they would retain, and yet found those same men, when in the House of Commons, deserting their principles, and obtaining the reward of their desertion, when one or two honest men resigned their places—could they believe that these honest farmers, that that independent yeomanry, would not, under such circumstances, take a leaf from the book of the Anti-Corn-Law League? Up to the present moment they had abstained from sending orators into the manufacturing districts, to excite the operatives against their employers. Had the Anti-Corn-Law League pursued the same course? No. They had sent down parties to hold meetings in different parts of the country, and, if he might use the word, to 'blackguard' all the landowners and farmers of the country. They had told them that their stacks would readily burn; but the farmers had never in turn told the operatives of the manufacturers that it was as easy to fire cotton as straw. They had never done so with respect to the operatives, the great body of whom, let it be remarked, were against free trade. They had never sent men amongst them to excite their passions; and he hoped and trusted they would not do so, because he thought it better to pursue their dignified course, and appeal to Parliament in the constitutional way. But let not any of their Lordships vote for any of those measures if they thought thereby to allay the excitement. Success had never produced, and never would produce, moderation in any political party. The Anti-Corn-Law League might tell them what they pleased about their dissolution; but he believed that body would never dissolve until they had destroyed the Established Church of this country, and every other institution which all their Lordships, he hoped, were prepared to stand by and defend. His noble Friend near him had asked a question with respect to the Poor Laws in Scotland; and had stated to their Lordships that there was great difficulty there of getting at "the means and substance." He (the Duke of Richmond) unfortunately had not been able to address their Lordships when the Scotch Poor Law had been under consideration; and he thought it a pity that his noble Friend had not made the remark at that time, because they had passed so remarkably clever a Bill that they had left it to every parish in Scotland, to say how its population should be taxed—whether according to "means and substance," or according to a certain fixed proportion. The consequence had been that there was a different mode of rating in every parish in Scotland; and he knew a gentleman having two establishments who was made to pay according to the English method of rating in the parish of his establishment where he did not reside, and in the parish where he did reside, according to his "means and substance," and was thus made to pay in the most unfair way. This fault rested with the Parliament. Why did they send such a Bill to Scotland? Why did they not see the difficulty? and, if they did, why did they not say that all parishes should be rated in the same way? With respect to the malt tax, he would not follow the noble Lord. He agreed with him that there was a great difference of opinion among the farmers themselves with respect to the malt tax; but, by the proposed measure, the price of barley would be reduced, and thus the tax would be rendered heavier. The duty was not levied on the value: it was a duty of 20*s.* a quarter, and, if the price fell, therefore the duty would be relatively higher. He had been in hopes that his noble Friend who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer would have said, if he could not have voted for a repeal of the tax, that he was in favour of a great reduction; for he believed that if there were a reduction in the duty, they would get quite as much revenue from the tax. His noble Friend had spoken of the opinions of Leibig, of Playfair, and of Graham—not a very good name for any agriculturist to rely on. No doubt those Gentlemen gave their best opinions. He must not be understood as speaking lightly of science, for he had been one of the first to bring in the aid of science to agriculture; but at the same time he must remind his noble Friend of the motto of the Royal Agricultural Society, "Practice with Science;" and he thought that within half an hour after leaving that House he could introduce to his noble Friend one of the most extensive farmers in the county of Norfolk who had tried the experiment, and found that he could feed his cattle much better on malt than on barley. It was true that the farmers might damp their barley, but the farmers had a horror of the excisemen who might then come upon their premises; the farmers must give notice, and then the exciseman might come upon their farms; and if he did not come, they were liable to have an information against them; and his noble Friend knew that a farmer had no

chance in the Exchequer. Upon the whole, he did not disapprove of the Motion of his noble Friend; but he again protested, and protested in the same language as his noble Friend near him (Lord Stanley), against the admissions of his noble Friend. He congratulated their Lordships, the agricultural interest, the labourers, and all connected with domestic industry, that his noble Friend had seceded from office, and was likely to bring the benefit of his great eloquence and ability to aid the cause of domestic industry. He could only say, that if these measures did come up to their Lordships' House he would endeavour, in every possible manner, to induce their Lordships to throw them out, because he did believe that if they passed they would entail ruin upon the agricultural interest, upon the labourer, and upon the domestic industry of the country of all sorts, even that of the manufacturers themselves.

Earl GREY said, he would take occasion to offer a few brief remarks; but in so doing, it was not his intention to enter prematurely on the discussion of that great and all-important question upon which it was likely that, at no distant period, they would be called to decide. Upon that vital topic he would not now touch, except so far as to say, that he fully concurred in the sentiment which had fallen from the noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley), namely, that that great question would have to be decided not on any considerations affecting any particular individual, or class of individuals, but upon considerations which had reference to the common good of the entire community; and that he was fully persuaded that when the subject came to be thus canvassed, it would be found that the interests of all classes were alike on that question. He had no doubt that when the proper period should arrive, he and those who coincided with him in opinion would be able to demonstrate that for the thirty years during which the protective system had, under one shape or other, existed in this country, it had been attended by constant and most severe distress to the agriculturists themselves—that for five consecutive years the country had never been exempt from the pressure of extreme agricultural distress, traceable in a very great degree, if not altogether, to the measures which they had adopted under the name of protection; and that, in fact, the experience of the system showed no better results than this—a perpetual succession of periods of great suffering, occasionally varied by short intervals of delusive prosperity. Fresh hopes had again and again been held out to the farmer, and again and again those hopes had been doomed to frustration; and after trying one form of protection after another, in all of which the last new plan was to have been better than its predecessor, and to have secured that prosperity of which they had been so often disappointed—that after trying protection in all those forms, they were now come to the conclusion that in all those forms it had practically failed. These were the propositions which, when the fitting occasion had arrived, he would be prepared to enunciate and maintain. In the remarks, however, he was now about to submit, he would strictly confine himself to the proper subject of discussion that evening. As it had been distinctly admitted on both sides that the appointment of this Committee was not to be made subsidiary to any attempt to postpone the decision which their Lordships would ere long be called upon to pronounce on the subject of the Corn Laws; and as the noble Lord whose Motion was now under consideration had expressly assured their Lordships that the Motion did not imply delay; and as moreover he had very fairly stated, that if he could establish the proposition that land was subject to certain peculiar burdens, the inference he intended to draw therefrom was, not that protection ought necessarily to be continued, but that that inequality should be in some way or other redressed; as this had been so admitted, he felt that he would not be warranted in opposing the appointment of the Committee. But at the same time that he made this admission, he could not forbear saying that he for one, being a person who, in common with his noble Friend (Lord Beaumont), had a deep interest in the prosperity of the land, could not but experience a feeling of extreme regret that this inquiry had been demanded; for he could not resist the conviction that if this matter were investigated dispassionately and impartially, and on sound principles, the result must inevitably be that those engaged in the inquiry must arrive at the conclusion that the landowners of England, instead of bearing a larger proportion of the public burdens than they could be fairly expected to sustain, were, on the contrary, subject to less than the proportion which might with justice be imposed on them. This was the state of facts which he was sure would be brought to light by the investigation which they

were now about to undertake; and as he confessed he was not sufficiently disinterested to desire that the taxation on the land should be increased, he would have been just as well pleased if this question had been permitted to remain in a state of repose, and that they had refrained from entering on an inquiry which might and probably would be attended with some very disagreeable results. He had not the slightest doubt upon his own mind that this inquiry would lead to the conclusion that the landowners, so far from bearing an exorbitant proportion of the burdens of the country, were scarcely called upon to sustain as large a proportion as, from their wealth and position, they might not unnaturally be expected to sustain. A noble and learned Lord, who was then gone from the House, had argued strongly that the whole matter should be left for the consideration of the Committee. Now he (Lord Grey) must say, that after the discussion which had already taken place, it did seem to him that they who held the opinion that exclusive burdens upon land did not really exist, were bound to state the grounds upon which they had formed that conclusion to their Lordships. If all parties had been contented to await the decision of the Committee, he should have done so also; but as very able and elaborate arguments had been put forth—particularly those on the part of his noble Friend—to show that the burdens upon the land were indeed heavy, he might be permitted shortly to refer to those arguments. In the first place, his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had entered upon the consideration of the question of tithes, and with all that ingenuity and ability for which he was so justly and so eminently distinguished, had argued to show that the noble Lord (Lord Beaumont), who brought forward this Motion, was mistaken in his view of the subject; for that, in point of fact, tithes did constitute one of the burdens to which real property was liable. In considering this question, however, it should first be clearly understood what was meant by "burdens on land.' Their inquiry should, in his mind (as had been justly observed by the noble Lord who moved for the Committee), be limited to an endeavour to ascertain whether there were any burdens which unduly and unfairly affected the application of capital to land, so as to prevent land from having that full and comprehensive benefit from the expenditure of capital which it might enjoy if there were no artificial causes to divert it in a different direction. His noble Friend had repudiated the idea of claiming as a ground in consideration of which compensation was to be granted, such burdens as fell only on the rent; he said that all he required was that capital should be permitted in the case of land, as in the case of all other things, to freely follow its natural course; and it must be admitted that this appeared very fair and very reasonable. If the noble Lords who were advocates of the protective system, could show that by tithes, or anything else, the application of capital to land in such a manner as to produce a fair and just return, was rendered difficult or impossible, and that the price of the article produced was thereby raised; if this could be shown, he would admit that a fair case for compensation would be made out; but he dissented altogether from the doctrine that tithes should be regarded as having any such effect: he denied that they were a burden on land, in the proper sense of the word. It was perfectly true (as had been argued by his noble Friend near him) that as long as tithes were an actual tenth of the produce, variable according to the variations in the amount of that produce, they were clearly a distinct charge on the capital employed in agriculture, and added to the cost of producing the corn. No doubt, as long as tithes were actually a tenth part of the produce, they might very fairly be regarded as constituting one of the real burdens on property. But the entire complexion of the case had been altered by the Tithe Commutation Act. By that Act the amount to be paid in tithes was definitely and specifically fixed; there were no longer any fluctuations or variations; the amount was definitely settled, and capital could now be applied to any extent on land, and yet no increase of charge would take place. Did any one believe that any increase of charge did take place? Surely not. He considered that the Tithe Commutation Act was one which had operated most beneficially for the landed interests of the country, and to its existence were to be attributed many of the improvements which had recently been introduced into the agriculture of the country. Under the old system many of these improvements would have been impracticable. The drainage, which of late years had been carried on to such extent in this country, could never have been accomplished if a deduction of one-tenth of the gross additional produce secured by the draining operations had to

be set aside for the purposes of tithes. In this, as in many other cases, it would not unfrequently occur that a tenth of the gross produce would be the entire amount of profit on which the capitalist could reckon. The noble Lord had assimilated the case of the farmer who was obliged to pay tithes, to that of a mill owner who was liable to a charge of one-tenth of the whole cloth that he produced; and he then proceeded to ask how was it possible that this charge did not add to the cost of the article produced?—and how (this being so) it was possible that any man so circumstanced could enter into competition with a trader who had no such difficulty to contend against? Now this was a very fair comparison in the case of uncommuted tithes; the cases were quite analogous under the old exploded system of tithes; but now that the tithes had been commuted, there was no feature of resemblance between them. The noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) contended that the position of the farmer under the commutation system was just as unfavourable as it was before; and he asked what difference did it make to him, that instead of this charge in kind of one-tenth of his produce, he was compelled to pay a fixed sum of money computed by the average value of the five years' payments he had made before; the charge, he said, was still the same in effect, and rendered him equally unable to compete with the unburthened millowner. The case so put did, no doubt, in some respect, bear out the argument of his noble Friend: but let him (Earl Grey) alter the position of the millowner a little, with a view of making it somewhat more analogous to the position of the occupier of land, subject to a rent-charge for tithe. He would suppose that a capitalist desired to build a mill, and that all or almost all the eligible sites for mills were occupied, and that no sites for mills could be obtained without a sum being given in payment to the owner of the land upon which the mill was to be built. Wherever he built his mill he would be subject to a charge—say of 100*l.* a year, for rent to the landowner. Now, what substantial difference did it make to that millowner whether he paid the 100*l.* a year to the owner of the site, or 90*l.* a year to the landowner, and 10*l.* a year for a tithe-rent charge? Surely, none in the world. That was a case which made the analogy complete; because in commuted tithes the sum paid was unvarying, and not, as his noble Friend had represented, a tenth of the whole quantity of manufactured produce. He might mention, in illustration of his case, that in ancient times, and he believed in modern times also, portions of estates were severed and conveyed over to tithe owners in lieu of tithes, and the remainder of the property became tithe free. He knew himself a case in point, where the portion of the estate was called Tithe-hill, in commemoration of the transaction. Could it be contended that the owner of the estate on which Tithe-hill was situated had the slightest claim for compensation, because from his estate there had been portioned off, in lieu of tithes, a portion of land in virtue of which (that is, because he had transferred it to the titheowner) the rest of his grounds were considered exempt from tithe? He, with others, was interested in the adjoining lands; and it struck his mind that nothing could be more unjust or absurd than that they, as owners of lands already tithe free, should seek compensation as if they paid a tenth of their produce. To him it appeared that they did not possess the smallest claim for compensation. But suppose that they had been relieved from the burthen of tithe by a different operation — suppose, instead of having severed a portion of their estate, that they had severed a portion of their rent merely, and that instead of receiving 1,000*l.* a year, they had agreed, in order to get rid of tithe, that they should relinquish 100*l.* a year, and retain 900*l.*, how could the burden of tithe be then said to interfere with the application of capital in the improvement of land? commuted tithe ceased to be a burden upon industry or enterprise. The fact was, the ownership of the soil in England was vested conjointly in the titheowner and the landowner. The rights of each were distinct and equally indefeasible. The same law which secured to the landlord his estates, assigned the tithes to the parties whose privilege it was to receive them; and for a landlord to claim compensation because of tithes, was nothing more nor less than to seek a reward for giving his own to another man. The ingenious nature of his noble Friend's argument led him to dwell upon this topic at some length, and that circumstance would induce him to be more brief in dealing with the rest of the subject. Something had been said about the great utility and advantage of getting rid of the malt tax. Now he (Earl Grey) saw no difference between the malt tax, and the

tax upon tea, and tobacco, and sugar, and foreign spirits and wines, or any of those other taxes on luxuries; and he considered it could be no more contended that the agriculturist bore the burthen of the malt tax, then it could be contended that the Chinese bore the tax on tea, the Americans that on tobacco, or the French that upon their wines and brandies. [Lord Beaumont: The charge imposed by this tax diminished the consumption, and lessened the demand.] He denied that the influence of the malt tax had by any means lessened the demand for barley; on the contrary, he would put it to any farmer or agriculturist whether there was any single article of produce for which the demand was better than barley; or whether it was not about the most profitable crop which he could grow? At least he (Earl Grey) could answer for it, that such was the case in the districts of the north of England with which he was acquainted. Now, in the first place, it was difficult to answer the argument used by his noble Friend (Lord Monteagle), that more was done to increase the demand for malt by giving the grower of malt a monopoly over the dealer in molasses, than to restrain the demand by laying a tax upon the article. The noble Lord said that if there were a greater demand for malt, more barley would be grown in this country than was the case at present; but he (Earl Grey) would ask any Gentleman who had a practical knowledge of the subject, whether we had not already as much barley as we could grow? He could only say for himself, that in the north of England all the best farmers grew as much barley as they could, and, upon the whole, it was the most profitable grain that they raised. But then their Lordships had been told of the virtual prohibition to use malt as food for cattle in preference to barley unmalted. He (Earl Grey) thought that this question had been satisfactorily disposed of by the debate which had taken place on the subject in the other House of Parliament, in the course of last Session. The noble Duke (Richmond) had said that the motto of the Royal Agricultural Society was, "Practice with Science;" but in this case practice and experiment had supported the conclusions of science; that this question had been investigated by some very eminent chemists who had showed that it was better to use barley, boiled or crushed, than malted; and their Lordships were well aware that, although the farmer was forbidden to convert his barley into malt, unless he paid the malt tax, he was at liberty to give it to his cattle either boiled or crushed. The conclusion of the eminent scientific gentlemen to whom he had referred was, that barley, when boiled, was more advantageously used to fatten cattle, than when it was malted; and sets of experiments had been made by these gentlemen on purpose to test the comparative excellence of the two modes of preparing the grain. The experiments were tried with some Ayrshire cows and some oxen, with the view of ascertaining the effect both upon milking and feeding; and the result was, that they pronounced the boiling of barley to be the most economical method of using it as food for cattle. As a further proof of this fact, he might mention that in Germany, where many scientific experiments on agricultural subjects had been made, and where there were no fiscal regulations to prevent the malting of barley, the practice of feeding cattle with malt did not prevail. He hoped, therefore, that noble Lords would not urge Her Majesty's Government to meddle with that source of revenue. He was certain that, in the whole amount of the revenue raised by taxes on articles of consumption, no tax pressed so little on the interests of the country as the malt tax. The tax was paid by the consumers of beer. Now, beer, after all, was a luxury; and although he should be glad if the people could obtain that luxury cheaper, yet there were other luxuries which were infinitely of more advantage to the labouring classes, such as tea and sugar; and he should consider a diminution of the duties upon these articles of consumption as of much greater consequence than the repeal of the malt tax. He believed that the duties imposed upon tea and sugar were much too high for mere revenue purposes; and before their Lordships meddled with so large an amount of revenue as that which was produced by the malt tax, they should well consider what they were doing. He believed his noble Friend, who came from a barley-growing district, had quoted a passage from a pamphlet, which he (Earl Grey) thought as crude and unsatisfactory as anything he ever read, recommending, instead of a malt tax, an increase of the property tax. Now, he (Earl Grey) confessed that he never heard any proposition which gave him more alarm. He looked with alarm at the tendency which had been exhibited of late years to get rid of indirect taxes, and to substitute a system of direct

taxation. He believed, that if this course were carried much farther, it would be exceedingly dangerous to the credit of the country. Passing from these two points, he now came to the question of local taxation, which his noble Friend (Lord Beaumont) had represented in such a strong light as affording a great claim for compensation to the landed interest. His noble Friend had told the House of an income tax of 12 per cent. on the real property of the country. Now, he (Earl Grey) did not quite understand his noble Friend's calculation. The income tax to which his noble Friend referred, the poor rate, was not imposed upon land alone, but upon houses, railroads, and canals. With respect to the exemption of stock in trade from assessment to the poor rate, the noble Lord on the cross benches had told their Lordships how very ill the principle of assessing stock in trade to the poor rate worked in Scotland; and he (Earl Grey) was sure that, if an attempt was made in this country to rate every man according to the estimated amount of his "means and substance," as in Scotland, the country would be extremely dissatisfied. The poor rate was now charged upon the value of land and houses, and not upon the land. In fact, the dispute about stock in trade began between the titheowner and the farmer, and not with the manufacturers, for the titheowner wished to make the farmer pay for the stock on his farm as his stock in trade, and the farmer very properly resisted the imposition. This was the origin of the temporary Acts of Parliament passed to exempt stock in trade from liability to the poor rate; but these Acts applied as much to farming stock as to the stock in trade of the tradesman or manufacturer. In his opinion, the existing arrangements on this subject were right; it would be impossible to ascertain the "means and substance" of all parties residing in a parish; and he believed that a poor rate could not be levied in this manner. But there was one principle which applied equally to all these different rates, of which the noble Lord who introduced the Motion had given their Lordships rather a formidable list, not even excluding the militia rate, which had not been levied for many years, and which he, for one, hoped would never be levied again; it was this—that, notwithstanding all these burdens of which so much had been said, land in this country bore a higher value than it did, for this obvious reason, that every burden laid upon the land was in consequence of some corresponding benefit conferred upon the landed interest. The application of the principle to which he referred, might be easily ascertained. He believed that the finest prairie land in Western America might be purchased in fee-simple at a dollar, or about 4*s.* per acre; he meant land fit for producing the most valuable crops: whereas in England the rent of the best land, intrinsically no better than the American land, was 40*s.* or 50*s.* How did it happen, then, that in America the fee-simple of land might be acquired at one-tenth the price which an occupier of land in this country would have to pay by way of rental? It was what were called the burdens on land which thus enhanced its value. The poor rates arose from a dense population; but the demand for agricultural produce sprung from the same cause; and the maintenance of the poor was a small price to pay for the vast increase in the value of land which a high state of civilization occasioned. The expense of maintaining the roads was mentioned as a reason why favour should be shown to the landed interest. Surely, there was no class of society which derived so much advantage from the roads as the agriculturists. As to the turnpike roads, they were maintained by the parties who used them; and with regard to the other roads, they were rather a source of profit than of expense to the landed interest. To go back, however, to the subject of the poor rates: in a thinly populated country there were no poor; for every man could get land, and by the most ordinary exercise of industry could maintain a family; but in proportion as population increased, land became more valuable and more difficult to be obtained; rents rose, and poor rates became unavoidable; so soon as money rents came into use, the difficulty of providing for the poor increased, but concurrently with that there arose a vast increase in the value of land. Land was now twenty-fold more valuable than it was 400 years ago; but as this increased value of land was occasioned by an increase of population, and as pauperism arose out of populousness, and as the landowners were the greatest gainers by the density of the population, they ought not to complain of paying the cost of that which was so much for their own advantage. Upon whom could the burden so properly fall as upon those who gained by it? And again, to recur to the subject of roads: the existence

of roads within and in the vicinity of an estate, formed its greatest possible recommendation as a marketable article. In offering an estate for sale, it was the practice of Mr. Robins, and other skilful auctioneers, to say that it possessed easy access to the best markets by means of good roads. A manufacturer might as well claim exemption from the cost of using gaslights in his mill, as a landowner claim compensation for maintaining the roads in his neighbourhood. He would not enter further into the question of the manner in which the remaining rates operated to the advantage of the land; it was enough to say, that the same principle applied to them also. In his belief, they were all payments in return for value received. He would ask their Lordships for a moment to consider whether the owners of land in the remote districts of Canada or America would not most gladly pay very much larger charges than those which had been adverted to, if by so doing they could obtain the same advantages as those which their Lordships enjoyed, namely, good roads, good markets, and the efficient administration of the law. They were not charges which fell on the capital of the farmer, but were, every one of them, charges which fell on rent. If a farmer were going to take a farm, the first question he asked was, what was the amount of the rates? because, if they were heavy, he offered a less rent than he otherwise would be willing to pay; and, if they were light, he, of course, offered more for the farm. Although, therefore, these rates were paid by the farmer in the first instance, they were in reality a deduction from the rent, to which, as he had endeavoured to show, their Lordships would do well to submit. Before he concluded, he had only one or two words to say with respect to the general taxation of the country. With regard to that point, he thought that the accompaniment offered to the Motion by his noble Friend near him (Lord Monteagle) was a most valuable addition to it. Out of every species of burden imposed upon the landed interest, he (Earl Grey) only knew one of which they had just ground to complain, and that was the stamp duty on conveyances. He believed, that of all the impolitic taxes that ever were imposed, that was the most impolitic. By the heavy charges on conveyances, it prevented the landholder, when the money market was easy, paying off one mortgage at a higher rate of interest, and mortgaging his land at the lower rate. It did not exactly prevent, but, at the same time, it checked and discouraged the granting of leases, which it was important to encourage as much as possible, with a view to the improved cultivation of the land. It also prevented the acquisition of small freeholds, a subject which he knew was not very popular in some quarters just now; but he believed that nothing could be more advantageous than to encourage persons to invest their small savings in land. That, therefore, was a charge which the House would do well to get rid of; and if any commutation of taxes could be made, by which this tax upon conveyances could be abolished, he should agree that the commutation would be very advantageous, not to the landed interest only, but to the nation at large. This single tax excepted, wherever he looked, he found, not special burdens on the land, but special exemptions. Some jokes had been made about shepherds' dogs and agricultural horses; but he really wished to know why agricultural horses were to be exempted from taxation any more than the horses of a brewer, for instance, with whom they were as much stock in trade as with the agriculturist? He would not detain their Lordships much longer; but he thought the House would be doing wisely by leaving the distribution of the public burdens to others. The less they inquired into the peculiar burdens on agriculture the better. He himself should be perfectly ready, in the hope of passing so large and useful a measure as that which was now before the Legislature, to acquiesce in the concessions which it was thought advisable to offer to the agricultural interest. But, although he did not intend to object to these concessions, he could not help recommending their Lordships not to press these inquiries too far. The topics to which he had already adverted, were not unknown to those whose vision was clear enough to see the weak points in the case of the landowner, and who had energy enough to press those topics, if necessary, to a trying conclusion. If the landowner attempted to drive a hard bargain with these Gentlemen, it would lead them to look at the matter in a very different temper to that in which they had hitherto viewed it, and to put forward arguments which it would be very difficult for the landowner to meet, and inconvenient to concede. In France, it had been stated in the House of Commons by the hon. Member for Sheffield, in the year 1838, that out of an income of 42,000,000*l.* in that

year, no less than 10,000,000*l.*, being one-fourth of the whole, was contributed by a direct tax upon real property. In Austria rather more than one-half of the public burdens were borne by real property. It was the ancient policy of this country to throw a great part of the public charges on land, in the same manner; and in the early ages of our history, the title upon which the whole soil of the kingdom was granted, was that of providing the charges of the military defences: subject to that burden the whole of the landed property of England was acquired by its original proprietors. And to a later period the same policy was continued; up to the time of the Revolution, the land bore a very large part of the public taxation. In the reign of William the Third a tax of 4*s.* in the pound was levied upon the land. That tax continued of the same nominal amount; but the valuation of 1692 being adhered to, the burden remained nominally the same, but it had really become a mere trifle. The whole valuation of real property subject to the land tax in 1692, was only about 10,000,000*l.*, because at that time a tax of 1*s.* in the pound produced only 500,000*l.* a year; and to make up the ten millions he was much mistaken if in the land tax were not included salaries and income from personal property and other sources, to a great extent. Now, by the recent valuation under the Income Tax Act—a Return of which had been laid before the House of Commons, containing the valuation for England and Wales—it appeared that real property only, strictly so called—he meant houses, lands, manors, tithes, and mines—were worth no less than 85,000,000*l.* a year; and that valuation excluded all incomes under 150*l.* a year. Therefore the land was now only bearing the charge imposed upon that property when it was less than one-eighth of its present value. These were things well known to many clear-sighted men, who could urge them with great effect; and he would beg, with great respect, to suggest that, as in that House they did not originate measures of taxation, so they should show their great prudence in abstaining from agitating this question. He had to apologize for occupying their time so long; but this was a subject of such deep interest, and leading to such practical conclusions, that, differing so widely as he did from some noble Lords who preceded him, he could not suffer their arguments to pass without some reply.

LORD ASHBURTON had great doubts as to the expediency of the Motion made by the noble Lord, and those doubts had been considerably increased by the discussion which had taken place; for it appeared to him that the Committee was more likely to be a scene of wrangling about general principles, than productive of any practical facts. At the same time certain questions of general principle had been mooted, to which he (Lord Ashburton) would briefly advert. The first was, whether tithe was or was not a charge upon land. This was not a new question. It had been argued by practical men and by political economists of every variety of tenet; but it had very seldom been denied till to-night that it was a charge at all. There had, however, been various opinions relative to the amount of the charge. Mr. Ricardo, in the year 1822, when he proposed a duty on wheat, which was to vary from 10*s.* up to 20*s.*, the minimum being 10*s.*, said, "I will state the ground upon which I calculate this duty. I find it stated in the evidence before the House of Commons, that the whole of the charges which the farmer is taxed to pay, are principally tithe and poor rate, which amount to 10*s.* per quarter." Mr. Ricardo admitted this to be a charge, and he measured his proposed duty by the consideration of what was the burden. It was said, however, that although tithe was a tax before the Commutation Act, in consequence of that commutation it was no longer a charge. This seemed at first a startling paradox, and a proposition not easily answered.

LORD BEAUMONT explained. He had said, that tithe was not a tax upon the capital employed in cultivation, but a direct charge upon the land.

LORD ASHBURTON said, the noble Lord contended that tithe was a charge before the commutation; but after commutation it ceased to be a charge. Now, he (Lord Ashburton) could not make out how that proposition was supported. Undoubtedly the tithe commutation was a benefit, as it enabled proprietors more freely to cultivate the soil without any fear of the charge being proportionately increased; but the charge still remained. If any of their Lordships had an estate of 1,000*l.* a year, upon which he (Lord Ashburton) had a mortgage of 500*l.*, and he lived in the same parish, the landed proprietor paid for the church, from which he (Lord Ashburton) derived as much benefit as the owner of the estate. Yet they were told the land incurred no charge, and the land in some

shape or other was entitled to no consideration in consequence of bearing a charge for a service which was of benefit to the whole community. It was impossible by any process of reasoning to come to the conclusion that tithes ceased to be a charge, from the fact of their having been commuted. Their Lordships were aware, that before the Commutation Act a great portion of the tithes was commuted by particular arrangements with individuals, and this was a fact which those who held the views of the noble Lord seemed never to take into account. Their Lordships should also bear in mind that if the land, in consequence of the cessation of protection should go out of cultivation, as was apprehended (justly he thought) by the landed interest—that portion of the land which would go out of cultivation, would be just that which paid tithe. It was, therefore, a direct charge upon the cultivation. The pressure coming upon them, successive varieties of soil would go out of cultivation, beginning with the poor, and rising up to the higher. It appeared to him, therefore, that cultivation would be prevented, and that tithes were a charge upon the landlord, and not upon the tenant. Much discussion had been advanced with respect to various other charges on the land, such as the poor rate and the land tax—both of these, undoubtedly, originally applied to every description of property; but what had been the practice? It had been found out that the poor rate could not fall upon other descriptions of property with anything like effect, as it was felt to be a sort of inquisition; and it was therefore levied as a charge upon the land only; and, singularly enough, the Poor Law Statute of Elizabeth, which was enforced in America, was still held there to include all kinds of property. The assessor in that country imposed what he pleased, and it lay with the proprietor to make out his own particular case of exemption, if he had any. It was the same with respect to the land tax in our own time; and a Bill had been brought into Parliament for the purpose of relieving the property in the town of Taunton, which he then represented, from the burden of that tax. He differed entirely from his noble Friend as to the propriety of making out plans, balancing inequalities of taxation on one side with inequalities on the other. That did not appear to him to be a right principle of legislation, unless they could make up their minds to level all inequalities together. On the general principle, he had no objection to the Committee; but he must state his own conviction, that protection, or compensation, or whatever name they chose to give it, in some shape or other, was justly due to the land, and that if it was abandoned, they would produce by impoverishment of the land misfortunes, not only to that, but to every other interest in the country. His noble Friend spoke of America and Canada, where they could get land for 4*s.* an acre in fee-simple, which in this country could not be got for 40*s.* a year rent; but the additional value given to the land here as compared with land in America, was not the fact as stated by him—a consequence of improved manufactures and greater wealth: it was owing to the fact that there were no inhabitants in those countries sufficient to raise its value. There was this great distinction between the two cases, that in this country the land was greatly increased in value by the price of labour; whereas its sole value in the rich prairies of the West was just according to the amount of the produce raised. They might as well set a value on the land where our first parents were placed in the Garden of Eden, and where there were none but themselves to cultivate the acres that lay before them in the world, as compare the value of land in America with what it was in this country. The cases were altogether different; and it was a confounding of their understandings to mix two such questions together. Seeing that the general opinion of the House was favourable to the Committee, he could only say he wished the noble Lord well through with it, and that he had a grave apprehension that no benefit would be derived from its appointment.

LORD BEAUMONT briefly replied.

Amendment and original Motion agreed to.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, February 16, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW MEMBER SWORN.—For Rutland, George Finch, Esq.

PUBLIC BILLS.—1°. Salmon Fisheries.

Reported.—County Works Presentments (Ireland).

3°. and passed.—Fishery Piers and Harbours (Ireland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED.—By Lord John Russell, from Importers, Dealers, and Consumers of Foreign Coffee, for Reduction of Duty.—By several hon. Members, from a great number of places, against, and by several hon. Members, from various places, in favour, of a Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Sir John Hanmer, from the Inhabitants of Kingston-upon-Hull, for Reduction in the Timber Duties, and immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Mr. Hume, from Tenant Farmers, and others, of Cortachy and Tanadice, for Alteration of Duties on Corn and Sugar.—By several hon. Members, from an immense

number of places, against the Government Measure relating to Customs and Corn Importation; and, also by several hon. Members, from a number of places, in favour of the proposed Government Measure.—By Mr. William Miles, from Distillers in the South Eastern District of Scotland, against the Reduction of Duty on Spirits.—By Sir John Hanmer, from the Hull Chamber of Commerce, for Alteration in the Duties on Tea.—By Mr. Hutt, from George Straker, in favour of a Reduction of Duty on Timber.—By Lord John Russell, from the Guardians of the Poor of the City of London, against Exempting any Parties from the Metropolitan District Asylums.—By Viscount Morpeth, and Lord John Russell, from Dewsbury, Skelmansthorpe, and Heap, in favour of a Ten Hours' (Factory) Bill.—By Mr. Hume, from Johnshaven, and Sir Robert Price, from Hereford, against Enrolment of the Militia.

PRIVATE BILLS.

Mr. GREENE moved—

"That it be an Instruction to the Select Committee on Petitions for Private Bills, and to all Committees upon Private Bills, not to hear parties on any Petition hereafter referred to them which shall not be prepared and signed in strict conformity with the Rules and Orders of this House."

He had taken a different view of the matter at first. He thought that there would be considerable injustice in refusing to hear those parties who, being at a distance, and being unaware of the rules of the House, should have forwarded petitions not strictly in compliance with those Orders. On consideration of the question he had also thought that the House having referred those Petitions to the Committee, the Committee had no power to refuse them a hearing. As to the clerks at the Table looking into the Petitions presented there for the purpose of seeing whether they complied with the Standing Orders, that was virtually impossible. It appeared, therefore, to him, that the Committees should be instructed to deal with the petitions sent to them. The Order was an absolutely necessary one, as the parties who petitioned against Bills were quite as much bound to comply with the Orders as any one else, and they would have abundant notice of the intention of the House from henceforth to enforce them. But he did not think that they could be enforced without the adoption of the present Resolution.

Mr. ENTWISLE thought some of the objections of petitioners against Bills were very frivolous, and he saw no reason why any relaxation of the Standing Orders should be extended to them. He knew one instance in which a petition had been presented against a Railway Bill, on the ground of the subscription deed not having been signed in accordance with the Standing Orders; the fact being, that about forty of the subscribers had signed by power of attorney, instead of personally; and the sole object of the petition, as avowed, had been to put the parties to the expense of bringing up witnesses from Scotland and Ireland to prove the correctness and validity of those signatures. He thought it not at all unjust that parties who came forward to oppose others on grounds of non-compliance with Standing Orders, should be compelled to comply with them themselves. He should therefore move, "That the word 'hereafter' be left out" of the Resolution proposed by the hon. Member for Lancaster.

Sir WILLIAM HEATHCOTE said, his first view of the case had been in favour of the Amendment just proposed; but on consideration it occurred to him that, in justice to the parties whose petitions had first brought about the discussion, it could not be enforced. Had the enforcement of the Standing Order been in the first instance insisted on, those parties would have been enabled to amend their petitions, and put the name or short title of the Bill at the heads of them, so as to have presented them in time to be heard. But now, if they were precluded from a hearing, they would be too late to amend their error, or have their petitions brought forward again.

Mr. B. ESCOTT thought the proposition was either a useless repetition of the rules of the House, or an improper interference with the rights of the petitioners. He thought that the matter too much affected one particular railway.

Mr. GISBORNE begged to be permitted to offer a few observations upon the question, as he had previously been heard upon the late occasion, when it had been before the House. It had been urged that the Standing Order No. 111-A could not be enforced by the Committee, because no penalty was attached to it. Why, he could show them one or two, or rather indeed very many others of those same Standing Orders, to which there were no penalties attached. As to the discovering of defects in the petitions which were presented to the House, the House did not pretend to find out defects in them. Petitions were seldom even opened. It was not known whether there was a single signature attached to them. It was taken on the good faith of the Member who presented the petition that it was what it professed to be. He was one of those who thought the Standing Orders too stringent, and that they ought to be relaxed. But whilst they

remained and were in force, the House should not take single cases of the sort then under consideration.

Mr. STRUTT, as the first person who brought the matter under the consideration of the House, could not allow it to be disposed of without offering a few observations. In the first place, he should observe upon the argument which had been used, that the Standing Order under consideration was of the same kind as all the other Standing Orders; and the hon. Member for Nottingham had just stated that if there were no penalty attached to the Standing Order 111-A, neither was there any penalty attached to the others. But he (Mr. Strutt) should say that there was a penalty attached to the others; and if his hon. Friend would look into the matter, he would find that there was a very serious penalty, being no less than the loss of the Bill, in the case in which the non-compliance should have been shown. The requirements of the Standing Order under consideration were very important, the object being to prevent mistakes in the case of petitions. He thought it very desirable that the House should come to the Resolution; and all that he objected to was that they should qualify it by the word "hereafter." As, however, the parties who had presented the petitions could have amended them had they been objected to at the Table of the House in the first instance, and as it would be then too late for them to do so, he would vote against the Amendment, and in favour of the original Motion.

Colonel ANSON thought that parties had had abundant notice of that rule. It had been a Sessional Order last year, and it had been made a Standing Order for the present year, so that the notice had been quite sufficient. He really thought that the parties infringing it ought to suffer penalties consequent, and he trusted that the House would agree to the Amendment of the hon. Member for South Lancashire.

The House divided on the Question, "That the word 'hereafter' stand part of the Question;" Ayes 105; Noes 63: Majority 42.

WAR IN INDIA.

Sir R. H. INGLIS: I wish to ask a question of the noble Lord, whom I see in his place, interesting to the country, with reference to the recent outbreak of war in India. I find that in a former instance the *Morning Herald*, and very lately the *Times*, anticipated intelligence from India; and my question is, whether Government has yet received information of the state of the war which had broken out in India? If such information be in the hands of Government, it is desirable that it should be made known, and I trust that the noble Lord will be able to satisfy the public anxiety on the subject. At present it appears that Ministers are behind the newspapers in their intelligence.

Lord JOCELYN: I regret to say that Ministers have no further information than what has already appeared in the public prints relative to the late transactions on the frontiers of our Indian possessions. No official despatches have been received by the authorities in this country from the Governor-General; but a private letter has come to hand from the Governor of Bombay, addressed to the noble Lord at the head of the department to which I belong. It inclosed a communication from the Governor-General, dated from Ferozepore on the 23rd of September, stating that between the 5th and 14th, large bodies of Sikh troops had invaded the country, in violation of the treaty of 1805, and menaced Ferozepore. They then attacked the advanced guard of the British forces, but were repelled, and the British troops were prevented from following them owing to the darkness of the night; they were consequently obliged to give up the pursuit. On the 21st the main body of the army moved against the enemy, the centre being led by the Governor-General, and the right by the Commander-in-Chief. The enemy had thrown up a fortified entrenchment, which was attacked, and the entrenchment was taken on the evening of the 21st. On the next morning a great number of the enemy's guns were captured, and the communication with Ferozepore was opened. We have no further communication than that private letter from Sir Henry Hardinge to the Governor of Bombay; but I have no doubt that in a few days we shall be in possession of information satisfactory to the country and to the hon. Baronet.

POOR LAW (IRELAND).

Mr. FRENCH rose to put a question of which he had given notice some time ago. He had seen it stated in the public prints, that the Poor Law Commissioners had taken upon themselves to dismiss two boards of guardians in Ireland. He had since received a communication stating, that the Commissioners had been defeated in a proposition brought before the board;

and that, in order to prevent a second defeat, they had taken upon themselves to dissolve them. The question was, whether it were true that the Poor Law Commissioners had taken upon themselves to dismiss the guardians of Castlereagh and Tuam?

Sir J. GRAHAM replied, that it was true that the Commissioners had thought it necessary to dissolve the board of guardians of Tuam and Castlereagh. He apprehended that what he was about to state would show that the exercise of this power was not only unobjectionable, but that it was absolutely necessary in the present circumstances of Ireland, distressing as those circumstances were. At Tuam and Castlereagh the guardians had positively refused to open the workhouse, or to relieve the poor out of doors. For that reason, and for that reason mainly, the Commissioners had deemed it absolutely necessary to dissolve the two boards, and to call upon the ratepayers to elect fresh boards.

LANDLORD AND TENANT (IRELAND).

Mr. S. CRAWFORD reminded the House that some time ago he had put a question on the subject of tenant compensation in Ireland, when he understood the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government to say that it was under consideration. As it was a matter on which he felt great anxiety, he trusted that he should not be thought too pressing if he now requested an answer to his question, whether the Government intended to introduce in the present Session any measure on the subject of landlord and tenant in Ireland, and particularly as regarded compensation to tenants.

Sir R. PEEL: I certainly do hope that Government will be enabled, in the present Session, to introduce a measure to the consideration of Parliament on the subject to which the hon. Member has referred.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE (FIFTH NIGHT).

The Order of the Day having been read for resuming the Adjourned Debate,

The Earl of MARCH rose and said: Sir, in addressing the House on this occasion, I can assure you it is not my intention to enter upon the subject at any great length, or to weary the House by going into any statistical details. That I conceive was most fully and unanswerably done by my hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles) on Friday night. I feel it would be presumptuous in me to attempt to add to arguments which I consider totally unanswerable. In the course of the debate of Friday night, the noble Lord the Member for Dungannon (Lord Northland), I must say, astonished me not a little. From the recent conversions that we have noticed, I do not think we ought to be very much surprised at the conversion of the noble Lord, though it has taken place at a somewhat more hasty notice than most of the other conversions. The right hon. Gentleman at the head of Her Majesty's Government assured us that a period of three years elapsed before he was quite cured of his former protective notions. And the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War informed us that he was convinced of his error at the late harvest; but the noble Lord the Member for Dungannon, during a period of one month, has made two speeches in this House—one on one side of the question, and one on the other. It is not for me to say in what private cell that noble Lord immured himself for maturing his ideas. But this I must say, that the noble Lord does not appear to have attended much to this debate; for most certainly the arguments have been hitherto totally on one side only, and all in favour of protection. In the course of this debate, the hon. Member for Bridport made a statement in this House which requires some little notice from me. I could wish most humbly, but at the same time most strongly, to impress it upon the mind of that hon. Member (and I am sure there is no man of honour who can make any objection to my observation) that hon. Gentlemen should not make any statement in this House without first ascertaining that that statement is totally and entirely true. The hon. Member for Bridport stated, that a noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond), one who is a strong advocate for protection, was a Member of the Administration that passed the Reform Bill; and that he was one of the Administration which, in order to carry that measure, threatened to swamp the House of Lords. Now, although it is very true and perfectly correct that the noble Duke alluded to by the hon. Member was a Member of the Administration that passed the Reform Bill, yet may I not ask, was not Earl Grey the Prime Minister of that Administration, and was Earl Grey an

advocate of free trade? Not at all; he was directly adverse to it. The hon. Member seemed to imply that it was impossible for that noble Duke to have been a Member of the Administration which passed the Reform Bill, and, consistently with such opinions, to be now an advocate for protection to agriculture. I cannot for a moment conceive what connexion there is between maintaining the return of Members for Gatton and Old Sarum, and maintaining protection to agriculture. I conceive it is perfectly consistent with the advocacy of protection, at the same time to say that such places as Manchester and Birmingham ought to be represented in the House of Commons, in preference to such horoughs as Gatton and Old Sarum. The hon. Member for Bridport also said (as I have just stated) that the same noble Duke was a Member of the Administration that threatened the possibility of swamping the House of Lords. I wish the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department were now in his place, for I would have appealed to him whether that noble Duke, on the proposition being made in the Cabinet, did not immediately resign his office? He resigned his office distinctly, on the ground that he would not belong to an Administration that could entertain a proposition for swamping the House of Lords; and he expressly declared that he would oppose any such measure even if he stood alone in the Cabinet. If the right hon. Secretary were here, he would bear me out in this statement. I believe the noble Lord the Member for the city of London (Lord John Russell) would also bear me out in that statement. I come now to the question more immediately under the consideration of the House, and that is, whether the principle of protection to native industry shall be entirely and totally done away with? I conceive that such a measure would bring utter ruin upon this country. One of the reasons put forward by the Government for their conversion to the principle of doing away with protection is, that a famine is likely to take place in Ireland. No one can deplore such a calamity more than I do; at the same time I think it most strange, if free trade be such an advantage to Ireland, and be a remedy for the many evils which that country labours under—I say I think it most strange and extraordinary, that so many nights of this debate should have passed by without the hon. and learned Member for Cork (Mr. O'Connell) getting up in his place, and in the name and on the part of his country declaring it to be his persuasion that this measure was at last to give them some relief, and that the Government were going to render justice, though tardily, to that country. In the course of the present debate we have heard it said that the earth is only a machine, and that the landed proprietors are nothing more than master manufacturers. Now, if this be true, if the earth is a machine, and if the landlords are master manufacturers, then, I ask, why not protect them in the same way as you protect the master manufacturers? If you protect the one, you ought to protect the other. I maintain that protection is necessary to both. The right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury has stated—and on this occasion I am not going to quote *Hansard* further than the volume for the present Session—he has stated that the landlords and farmers would lay out more capital upon their land, than they do now; that we do not know the great benefits that agriculture would derive from the application of science and chemistry in the preparation of manure; that we shall have the land better cultivated; and that agriculture is still in its infancy. Now, if the right hon. Baronet admits this, then I want to know how he can come to this House and state that we do not require the same protection as was given to the master manufacturers, when they were in a state of infancy? I maintain that the capitalists engaged in the production of corn are entitled to at least the same amount of protection as the capitalists engaged in the production of manufactures. If the capitalists engaged in the production of manufactures are entitled to protection on account of the capital engaged, and the number of workmen and operatives employed, this, to say the least of it, applies with equal force to agriculture. The right hon. Gentleman, the Secretary for the Home Department, in a speech which he delivered the other night, alluding to the settlement of the question, gave it as his opinion, that with the feeling of the great bulk of the community on the subject, as it was at present, there was but one settlement of the question possible. Now in that opinion I entirely agree. I maintain that the great feeling of the community, at present, is decidedly in favour of protection. I maintain that the feeling of the country is opposed to the proposition brought in by the right hon. Gentleman at the head of Her Majes-

ty's Government. And if the right hon. Gentleman wants any proof of this, I have nothing to do but refer him to the election (though it is not yet over, but I understand there is no doubt about the result) for Gloucestershire, the election for East Sussex, the election for Dorsetshire, besides many other recent elections. [Dr. Bowring: Why don't you refer him to the election for Chichester?] The hon. Member for Bolton mentions Chichester rather with a sneer. Now, I can tell him, with regard to the city of Chichester, that during the five days' canvass which my brother made in that town, he certainly did not find above twenty electors who were advocates of free trade. Now, if the hon. Member thinks there were others in that town, advocates of free trade, I ask him why they did not come forward when they had the opportunity afforded them, when the show of hands was in favour of the Gentleman who advocated free trade—and my brother required a poll? It was for the best of all possible reasons—they knew that they should be beaten. In the speech which the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War made the other evening, he gave us what he called his "cogent reasons," and he seemed to lay great stress upon them; and one of them was the settlement of the question. But certainly his way of settling the question was, to my mind, as clumsy a way as anybody could devise: it was by throwing the Corn Laws over altogether. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the noble Lord the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster have not as yet given us their opinions. No doubt they have equally cogent and strong reasons for inducing them to support the measure brought in by Her Majesty's Government; but I must say, I am one of those who should very much like to hear what are the opinions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer — a great authority upon all these questions; and I should like to hear the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster upon this measure, and whether the two right hon. Gentlemen have exactly the same views of the question as those entertained by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War laid great stress in his speech on the great inconvenience of Members being made delegates in this House. "It is contrary," I think he said, "to the Constitution of the House; the Members are not delegates; they are free in this House, representing, it is true, the feelings of their constituents, but they are not delegates." The noble Lord the late Member for Nottinghamshire, in his address here the other day, stated—"Neither they nor I were sent to Parliament, either as agents or delegates to advocate one set of measures in preference to others, but, as Members of a deliberative assembly, to legislate for the good of all, for the welfare of the nation." And in this part of his address I entirely agree; but does the noble Lord forget that when he was returned in 1841, he was elected purely on principles of protection? Because, what his pledges were, or whether he pledged himself or not, to his constituency in 1841, I have no idea; but he was sent to Parliament for the purpose of being a Member of a party of which the right hon. Baronet was supposed to be the head. That party, certainly, was opposed to the proposition of the noble Lord the Member for London; and that party did advocate strong protective principles at that time. I do not blame or impute any impure motives to the noble Lord and others who have altered their opinions along with him; but if they have changed their opinions so decidedly, I do not think it is any extraordinary thing on the part of their constituents to request them to give back the trust which was reposed in them when they were sent to Parliament. And the noble Lord and the other hon. Members who have changed along with him would have an excellent precedent for complying with such a request, in the right hon. Baronet now at the head of affairs, who, some time back, when he had seen reason to alter the views he had entertained on the Catholic question, resigned his post to the members of the University of Oxford. Now, what did the noble Lord the late Member for Nottinghamshire say to his constituents at Newark in 1841? Now, this is rather remarkable. He said, "Fellow countrymen, first let me congratulate you that the country has refused to be cajoled by the latest fabrication from the workshop of Whig trickery and delusion. The cry of 'cheap bread' is scouted from one end of England to the other. Even the boroughs have scorned to be caught by this party clap-trap, this fugitive humbug of a dying political faction." Now, I venture to say, that the noble Lord will not hold that language when he addresses his constituents again. The hon. Member for Dublin, the other night, quoted part of the right hon. Baronet's speech in 1839, as if it forward-

ed his views of the question, now that he, like many others, has become an advocate for free trade. I shall quote a portion of the very same speech. The right hon. Baronet on that occasion said :—"But, says the farmer, extend the same principle to everything else as well as to corn. Don't make me the sole victim of this excellent doctrine. Let me grow my own tobacco; let me manufacture and consume my own malt. Look at every article I wear —from the sole of my shoe to the crown of my hat—everything is taxed, and taxed for the purpose of protection to manufactures—my shoes, my buttons, my hat, my gloves, my silk handkerchief, my watch, and every article of manufactured linen. Whatever I require for domestic use is taxed. Gold and silver plate, paper, china, clocks, thread, pots, wax, wire—every letter of the alphabet presents some article of domestic manufacture protected by taxation from foreign competition. If it be right to buy corn in the cheapest market, it is right to buy everything else; and if the article I sell is to be exempt from protection, let the article I buy be exempt also." But you leave it on manufactures. ["No, no."] Yes, you do. What I say is, if you take it off one, take it off all. Nay more, suppose the farmer asks you to begin with the manufacturer before you visit him, will his request be an irrational one? But the right hon. Gentleman begins with the farmer before the manufacturer. Suppose he says, "I am a man of little education, of limited views, not a man of business, little versed in the principles of political economy, and not very clearly understanding the doctrines of free trade." I think very few people do. "Spare me for the present, and make the first experiment on my neighbour the manufacturer. He is educated, intelligent, a man of business, not attached to localities, sees all the evils of restrictive duties, and is ready to wave the advantage of protection. I the more earnestly implore you to deal first with the manufacturer, for I greatly fear, if you begin with me, that you will discover hereafter that the principles of free trade, though applicable to corn, are not applicable to manufactures; that there are insurmountable difficulties in discriminating between duties for protection and duties for revenue, and that you will finally tell me, that the welfare of manufactures and of agriculture is inseparably united, and that it will be for the manifest advantage of agriculture, that the protecting duties on domestic manufactures should not be hastily withdrawn." Now, I have quoted this part of the right hon. Baronet's speech, not to taunt him with having altered his opinions, but because it it is put forward in language far better than I could use, and in advocacy of the cause which I now maintain. It is not my wish to sacrifice the interests of any class in this country; nor do I think that this question should be advocated as arraying one class against another. I think that the interests of agriculture and manufactures are inseparably united; I think that what is injurious to the one is injurious to the other; and, in the words of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary for the Home Department—for I find that it is impossible better to back our arguments, and that to assist us in making our speeches we cannot have better text-books than the speeches made by that right hon. Gentleman, and now that the right hon. Gentleman has discarded them all, he can have no objection to our making use of them—I say, I cannot give my assent to this proposal, because I conceive it to be founded on a principle neither just, necessary, nor true. I cannot, in my conscience, advocate a measure which I think so detrimental to all classes of the people.

Mr. B. COCHRANE explained. He claimed credit for never having made offensive personal allusions; and when he spoke of the noble Duke in conjunction with the Reform Bill, he had treated it as a mere matter of public history, not pretending to be acquainted with the secrets of the Cabinet. It was now stated that the noble Duke had resigned rather than consent to swamp the House of Lords; and he (Mr. B. Cochrane) gave him full credit for his conduct. No man had a greater respect for the personal character of the noble Duke than he had, and he never meant to make an attack upon it.

Mr. M. GIBSON intended to make only a comparatively few observations on a question in which he had taken much interest, and which importantly affected the prosperity and comfort of his constituents. To one part of the speech of the noble Lord who had just resumed his seat, he gave a most cordial concurrence: he referred to the passage where he stated that, if protection were not good for corn, it was not good for manufactures. He admitted that the noble Lord and his friends had a perfect and indisputable right to claim at the hands of Parliament, that if there were no legis-

lative encouragement to the growth of corn, there ought to be no legislative encouragement to the progress of manufactures. Those with whom he acted had invariably, in their petitions and resolutions, enounced one principle; and that was, the abolition of all protective duties, not only as applied to corn, but as affecting the manufactures in which they were engaged. He denied that the great portion of those who had been engaged in this free-trade movement had been animated by any peculiar animosity against any peculiarly protected class. Their object was, the abolition of all protection; and in that respect he should be happy to go with the noble Lord and his friends around him. But, after all, these were extrinsic topics. The immediate question before them was that of the Corn Laws. Anything that Ministers might have said upon former occasions, was but of small moment as compared to the question of whether it were right to abolish the Corn Law. He was told that this Parliament was elected to maintain protection, and that it could not, therefore, deal with the question of protection. Why? He maintained that it was because protection was the main question in 1841, that that Parliament was of all others the best fitted to decide upon that proposition. To say that because certain Gentlemen found it inconvenient to give particular votes, that, therefore, the Parliament was incapable of deciding on a great national question, was a proposition which could not be maintained for a moment. He doubted, indeed, whether, if they were to appeal to the country, the electors would return a more respectable set of Gentlemen than those he saw around him, or men upon whom they could safely place greater reliance. The country certainly would not have a better guarantee for the fidelity of those it might return, than it already possessed for the good faith of those whom it had already sent to Parliament. Why, what was the language of a Gentlemen now a candidate for the representation of Suffolk? He said, he left himself open to vote on the corn and on all other questions, as he should deem best for the interest of the country. This was one of the new protectionist candidates. How did they know but that he might be open to argument—determined to examine carefully, and to decide conscientiously? But how did the case, as to the Parliament being elected to support the right hon. Baronet and protection, really stand? He knew that appeals had been made to constituencies on behalf of the right hon. Baronet on that ground; but it had been urged in manufacturing districts, that the right hon. Gentleman and his party would and could do more for free trade than the noble Lord and his friends on that side of the House. Indeed, it was brought as a reproach against him (Mr. M. Gibson), that he belonged to a party incapable of advancing the cause of free trade so much as lay in the power of the right hon. Baronet. The supporters of Sir George Murray in Manchester took that course; and the same thing was done in various other manufacturing towns. The fact was this, Gentlemen in the agricultural districts made a great mistake in taking "protection" for a party cry at the last election. And if there were any charge of deceiving and misleading persons out of that House, it rested on the Representatives of the agricultural interest. They it was who induced the tenant-farmers to believe that statesmen of reputation could be found who would undertake to all time the defence of agricultural monopoly; they allowed and encouraged the tenant-farmers to believe that Parliament would maintain those laws, although they had received repeated cautions that such a course was inconsistent with the statements made by the leaders of Parliament in that House. But hon. Gentlemen persevered in telling the farmers that there would be legislation to increase the value of corn. They made that mistake, and they were now suffering the consequences. In point of fact, the position under which Government took office was this: the right hon. Baronet had said, "Call me in, and I will prescribe." They had called him in; he had prescribed, and they were now labouring under the effect of the dose which he had given them. It was a searching dose—a drastic purge, no doubt; but hon. Gentlemen must be prepared for those strong and searching medicines when we had great national evils to deal with. But it was wasting time to dwell on those questions of Ministerial and personal consistency. He would, therefore, refer, with the view of replying to those statistical statements which had been adduced the other night by the hon. Gentleman the Member for Somersetshire. That hon. Gentleman had informed the House that the British farmer was unable to compete with the American and Polish agriculturist, because he had certain expenses in the cultivation of the soil to bear, which did not oppress those foreign agriculturists;

and the hon. Gentleman went on to give an instance of a farm in which the four-course system of husbandry was carried on, three parts being arable, and the fourth devoted to pasture. He stated that the labour employed on that farm cost from 30*s.* to 35*s.*, and that the local taxes amounted to 4*s.* or 4*s.* 6*d.* per acre—both taken together amounting to 37*s.* per acre. Then they were told that the average quantity grown was about four quarters per acre; and by this amount, were they to divide the 37*s.*, they would get a product of a very little more than 9*s.* as the expenses of labour and local taxation on each quarter of wheat. The cost of production for labour and local taxes was then 9*s.* per quarter. Very well. What was the item which they complained of as constituting their disability to compete with foreigners? Was it rent? It must be. All other items were borne both by foreign and English farmers. Yet they said it was not rent—rent was out of the question—they repelled the idea of legislating to raise rent. The burdens borne, then, were simply the 8*s.* for labour and the 1*s.* for local taxation per quarter. Was it not so? Well, the right hon. Baronet, in his scheme, by leaving a permanent duty of 1*s.* per quarter, had clearly left them a protecting duty equal to the whole amount of their local taxation. Now, with regard to wages, he would ask them how much less than 8*s.* per quarter did labour cost in America? Why, it was notorious that labour was much more expensive there than here. In America, the labourer had nearly double the amount of wages. How, then, came it that this item of 9*s.* could be pleaded as a burden which disabled them from competing with the foreign agriculturists? Consider that the average freight of 8*s.* or 9*s.* per quarter from the United States more than covered all their expenses, labour and local taxation put together. Thus they were protected by the natural course of things to the full extent of the disability which they pleaded. But he contended that the foreign corn trade has as much right to be favoured as the pursuit of growing corn at home. It was no answer to their arguments to say, that the price of bread was enhanced by the avarice of millers and bakers; for that plea was clearly inconsistent with the one used by the same hon. Gentleman, that even supposing the price of bread to fall, wages would fall with it; if so, then it followed that bakers and millers, in enhancing the prices of bread, did really no harm to the consumer. The fact seemed, however, to be, that the hon. Gentleman wished for one law to keep down the profits of the bakers, and another to increase the profits of the farmers. He contended that such was not a case upon which the protectionists could come down to the House, and claim restriction upon the foreign corn trade. But why was it that this extraordinary timidity existed on the subject of Corn Law repeal? If the Corn Laws were such an important element in the value of land, how was it that that value remained undisturbed now that these laws were about to be repealed? The conduct of capitalists in dealing with a commodity with respect to which a great change was expected, was the best of all guides as to the effect on the value of that commodity which that change would produce; and he believed that capitalists were as ready as ever to embark their money in land. He had been informed that in the county of Suffolk, since the period of the rumours of Corn Law repeal, no fewer than sixty-three farmers (and they had all been communicated with by a friend of his, whose tenants they were), had made agreements to renew their leases for long periods, without one having asked for a reduction of rent. Twenty of the number stated, that in the opinion of farmers a repeal of the Corn Laws would not involve the necessity of a reduction in rent. What, then, was the meaning of the alarm he heard on all sides expressed? Did the protectionists wish to cripple the advance of manufactures? Were they jealous of the progress of trade and commerce? He did not believe that they were; but their conduct would lead many to believe that they wished to raise themselves by depressing others. He believed, that that unworthy feeling did enter into many minds. He believed, that there was a jealousy of the advance of the mercantile and trading community. Why, let them look to their social system. Had they not attached to the possession of land social advantages and estimation, which they did not attach to trading and commercial pursuits? Had it not been their system to make the possession of land the test of fitness for the administration of the national affairs—the test of fitness for admission into the other House? for, though he admitted that Gentleman who had acquired great wealth and power by commercial pursuits had been raised to the peerage, still they were not admitted to the upper legislative assembly

until the possession of a landed estate had rendered them, in the estimation of the privileged classes, fit to be trusted. Was it not laid down, even on the passing of the Reform Bill, that one of the objects of the measure, so far as the distribution of the representation was concerned, was to give a predominent influence to the possessors of land? He contended, at any rate, that the possession of land gave the greatest legislative advantages; that the landed gentry had a monopoly of the Cabinet, and the principal offices and emoluments of the State; that it was the boast of their leaders that they could make and unmake Ministries; and the party that had such power could select for itself all the advantages of the State. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury told them, and told them truly, that their aristocracy was a territorial aristocracy. There was no doubt it was so; and if the Corn Laws were repealed to-morrow there would be only an increased competition for that property which conferred such immense boons on its possessors. If this change were long resisted, the inference would be irresistible, that the landed gentry wished to retain their functions for their private and political interests, and for their advancement in political power. "There is a portion of the question" (said the hon. Gentleman) "to which I wish particularly to allude. As the Corn Laws are to be totally abolished, I wish to ask why the change should not now take place? Why defer to a future day what justice requires, and what the emergencies of the country at the present moment especially call for? If there be any force of argument in the failure of the potato crop, and the deficiency of corn in the north of Europe; and that therefore it would be difficult to procure supplies of food for our population —if there be any force in that argument, it calls on the Legislature seriously to consider whether the emergencies of the country do not require an immediate measure of relief, and not one that is to have effect at a future time. I, for one, think the agricultural interest would be benefited by an immediate, rather than by a deferred, repeal of this law. I believe, that if you are to enter into competition with foreign agriculture, you had better take your competitors by surprise, than give them warning. The two courses are otherwise inconsistent. The present emergency is not an argument for doing something three years hence; for, if you admit the evil, you should at once apply the remedy. The right hon. Secretary at War said, he was of opinion that the ports should have been opened two months ago. Well, then, the necessities of the country, as well as the interests of agriculture, urge the Government to take the step now at all events. You can never bring about a complete and pacific arrangement of the present question short of total and immediate abolition. While any part of the law is left on the Statute Book, you will have some agriculturists rallying round it in its defence. That will render necessary an army of observation on the other side; and in this way the conflict you deprecate will be perpetuated. I am as anxious as any man that the agitation should be got rid of to-morrow. So strong is the conviction out of doors, among those who support a repeal of the Corn Laws, that the question should be at once set at rest, that those who represent their opinions in this House will be bound to take its sense on this part of the question. The Corn Law question has found its way into this House in the face of unprecedented obstacles. It has found its way in the teeth of an adverse majority. It is here now, and it never would have been had it not been backed by the public opinion of the country. I believe that no course that any individual Member can take, can endanger the passing of this Bill. If it can be endangered by a Motion here, the other House would throw it out. The measure has not been brought to its present position by politicians in this House; it will be carried, if at all, by the voice of the country; and unless it rests on that substantial basis it will fail. I do not wish any measure to be carried on any other ground. And let me tell the hon. Gentlemen opposite, they cannot have a better barometer of public opinion than the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government. Yes, if you want to know what the great mass of the people are thinking about, see what the right hon. Gentleman is doing. He is moving with public opinion; he has measured and justly appreciated public opinion; and when you talk of confidence in public men, you should remember that the only confidence worth having in statesmen is, that they will not set public opinion at defiance, or resist changes which inquiry has shown to be safe, and which are founded on a sound and true economy. Public confidence is not to be acquired by mere party manœuvring. The bulk of the commu-

nity is every day becoming more practical. The great meetings held at different parts of the country have not been engaged in discussing the merits of particular party leaders. They have not said that some men are not better to administer public affairs than others: but the public of late years have not so much looked to the distinctions of Whig and Tory as to the prospect of carrying great practical measures of reform. I do caution, from the bottom of my heart, the hon. Gentlemen opposite against prolonging this conflict with the manufacturing and labouring classes. They have taken a position which they cannot defend with credit, and which they will be compelled to abandon with disgrace; aye, and it may be with more than disgrace. Have a dissolution if yon will. The only effect will be the postponement of this measure. I do not object to a dissolution on any other ground than that I think it behoves Members who are now entrusted with the care of the national interests to deal with the present emergencies before an appeal is made to the people. I think we are not discharging our duties if we suffer any time to elapse before we provide for that awful deficiency which is staring us in the face, and from which the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department apprehends the most serious consequences. I once more call on you to consider that you have no right to lay down the conditions on which manufacturers and merchants shall carry on their trade. The merchants who import foreign corn should be as free from let or hindrance as you to cultivate your estates. I implore you not to press your antiquated feudal pretension, that you are entitled to say on what terms the trade of the country should be carried on. I call upon you to be satisfied with the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of your estates, and let trade and commerce flourish in freedom."

Mr. HALSEY said: If I could agree with the right hon. Member for Wilts that this was a mere fiscal question, involving only the consideration of Customs' Duties, I should have been well content to leave the discussion of the policy implicated in it, to those whose longer experience, whose greater talents, and more lucid eloquence, give them a better claim to the attention of this House; but as it is not on mere fiscal grounds that I shall oppose this measure; as imputations of legislating for a class have been thrown out against those who advocate the system of protection, I trust this House will hold me excused if I do not give a silent vote. Some hon. Members on this side of the House, who have signified their intention of supporting the right hon. Baronet, have done so, not because their views are changed, or their opinions altered, but because they think it necessary that Her Majesty should have a strong Government, and because they have more confidence in the right hon. Baronet than in the noble Lord opposite. This might be a valid argument, if the strength of a Government depended merely on the number of its followers, without any reference to that which alone can give it energy or independence—I mean the free confidence of the public, a confidence which will never be bestowed where consistency is wanting. I do not stand here to impugn the motives of the right hon. Baronet; but I do say, that with all his high talents, with all his persuasive eloquence, it will be impossible for him to persuade the public that he has played a consistent part; and I look upon it as one of the worst of the many evil consequences which will follow the introduction of this measure, that there must be hereafter in the public mind such a total want of confidence in the professions of public men, as will not only lower the tone of public morality, but will, for years to come, deprive any future Administration of that which ought to constitute the main element of their strength. We have been often told, in the course of this debate, that hon. Members do not sit in this House as mere delegates of their constituents; but neither do they sit here as delegates of a Minister; and I do think that if anything could justify electors in demanding pledges of their Representatives, it would be what is now taking place in this House. Some hon. Members on this side of the House, who support the right hon. Baronet, have given some account of the considerations which led to their conversion—a conversion which a noble Lord has well characterized as miraculous. Will it be presuming too far, if I express a hope that the rest of these extempore proselytes will follow their example? I think they might give some instruction to the House, and a useful lesson, perhaps, to their constituents. The right hon. Baronet has told us, that his change of opinion was caused principally by the anticipation of a famine in Ireland, consequent upon the partial failure of the potato crop. I would not speak with levity, as, God knows, I do not think with

indifference, of what may concern the lives of thousands of my fellow countrymen; but I do not hesitate to say—and some of the right hon. Baronet's late Colleagues have held the same opinion — that I do not share the right hon. Baronet's apprehensions to the same extent; but even if the evil is as serious as the right hon. Baronet supposes, I maintain that, if we consider the general prosperity of the country—the great and growing demand for labour — and the unprecedentedly large quantity of food in our storehouses — a quantity unexampled at this season of the year—we may well be grateful that we are so well prepared to bear up against such a calamity. If the right hon. Baronet, under these apprehensions, had applied a temporary remedy to a mere temporary evil, and had then demanded of this House to be released from the responsibility he had thus incurred; though I might not have shared his apprehensions—though I might have doubted the wisdom of his remedy—yet I feel such a high sense of the great responsibility which attaches itself to his high office, that I should have come here prepared to support him, as I am now to oppose him. I will now advert in a few words to what has certainly some bearing on the present question — the proceedings of a body of men calling themselves the Anti-Corn-Law League. Although the right hon. Baronet has complacently informed this House that he has put an end to agitation, yet it is not the less a notorious fact, that these men have collected, or pretended to collect, large sums of money. They have sent agents into every county and borough in England; they have held large meetings, and made seditious speeches; they have tampered with the registrations, and interfered with the elections; and it is a well-known fact, that they posted no less than 25,000 letters at Manchester in one day, containing objections to the votes of electors in several counties. They were signed by men of straw, and were abandoned on the appearance of defence; but the consequence was, that some thousands of honest Englishmen were compelled to incur a great expenditure of time and money, or else to submit to be robbed of the dearest, the most constitutional privilege of an Englishman. I do not hesitate to say that these proceedings are not honest—they are not constitutional; and if they are legal, I trust that the Government will provide that they shall no longer be so. It has been the avowed intention of these proceedings to influence the decisions of the House; and though I will not believe that they could have had such an effect, I must say that, at least, the measures of Her Majesty's Government are introduced at a most inopportune moment, because it leaves them open to the suspicion of being acted upon by such unworthy influence. I will not enter at length into the discussion on the policy of this motley measure—a measure which acknowledges free trade as its principle, and does not carry it out—which repudiates protection, and leaves it existing. There are, however, two or three articles upon which I will say a few words; the first of these is tobacco. It is well known that tobacco could be cultivated with great profit in most parts of the kingdom. Why, then, is the cultivation of it prohibited? Are we to throw open our barns to compete with the world, and to cultivate our land with our hands tied behind us? But we are told that the revenue derived from tobacco cannot be spared: will the right hon. Baronet inform this House what is the lowest amount of revenue which he considers sufficient to warrant a departure from principle, and to justify injustice? The right hon. Baronet proposes to reduce the duty on foreign hops by one-half; but I have looked in vain for a reduction in the Excise upon English hops. Does not the right hon. Baronet suppose that English malt, free from duty, would fatten our cattle as well and as cheaply as American maize? Then as to books—we could import English books printed abroad much cheaper than we can print them here; but there is a direct prohibition, which I confess I did not expect to find in a free-trade Tariff. Now, this is not a case of revenue, but a clear *bonâ fide* protection. How do you account for this? Can it be that the right hon. Baronet fears to carry out his own principles — that he dreads to disturb that hive of stinging bees, the "*genus irritabile vatum?*" I do not stand here to advocate free trade; but if we are to have free trade, it must be free trade in reality, and not in name only; and I say that, if protection is swept from the agriculturist, the manufacturer cannot expect to retain it. The right hon. Baronet has told us that he cannot calculate what the price of wheat will be; but if it should fall very considerably, as I believe it will, upon what basis does the right hon. Baronet propose to resettle the tithe commutation? The right hon. Baronet has

informed this House that he does not consider that the Revenue will be affected by his proposed changes. Now, without doubting his political sagacity, I think that he may be compelled to carry out his own principles—that he may be forced to perform one or two embarrassing acts of justtice, which may affect the Revenue ? How, then, would he supply that deficiency ? Would he double or treble the Income Tax ? Would he make that tax avowedly permanent ? These are questions of some importance to the country. I shall now content myself by saying that I believe that this measure will be injurious to all, and ruinous to some, especially to the labourer and the artisan. I believe it will subvert the whole system of society, and thus endanger our most valued institutions. I think the time and circumstances unsuitable, and I think the proposer more unsuitable still; and I am sure that it does not even carry out the principles it professes. Upon these grounds, therefore, I shall give it an humble, but an honest opposition. And now, like the Macedonian of old, who appealed from Philip drunk to Philip sober, I would make my humble appeal from the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Councils, to the right hon. Baronet the consistent leader of Her Majesty's Opposition; and could I obtain an answer as candid as that which the Grecian courtier received, I should look to the result with equal confidence.

Mr. DICKINSON said, that he thought that the hon. Member who had just spoken would scarcely contend that tobacco could be profitably grown in this country, if the ports were open for the introduction of that article from all foreign countries, and yet he had blamed the right hon. Baronet for not permitting its cultivation on the free-trade principle. It was his opinion, that had the measure been introduced as a temporary means of relief, that the ports could never have been shut again, and then the right hon. Baronet would have been accused of taking advantage of a temporary want to remove those protective duties which he knew could never be restored. He, for one, believed the present proposal just and right, considering the difficulty of coming to any decision on the question which alone agitated the country; he feared it would be torn to pieces between the two great parties and combinations which pervaded it, and saw great danger to its best interests had the right hon. Baronet followed the advice tendered to him, and appealed to the constituency. Although the question before them was certainly of importance, he did not consider it of such paramount greatness as it had been represented. As one of those persons who had been returned last year, on the interest of persons holding strong opinions with respect to free trade and the Corn Laws, he felt it his duty to state his present opinions, and how far they had been changed since that period. Several speeches had been made respecting this point, which he thought contained attacks on the heads of Her Majesty's Government not at all consistent with generosity or fair play. At the last election he made no statement as to his opinions on the Corn Laws. He thought that if possible such laws should be of a permanent nature, and that they involved too great a question to be allowed to remain in a state of continual disturbance. At the last election he perceived that changes must be made; but at the same time was opposed to any measure which would have the effect of leaving this country dependent on foreign nations for a regular supply of food. That reason had lost much of its weight with him since that period; for he now thought that it was of importance that our supply should come from as many countries as possible, and that it little mattered whether it came from America or Prussia. He had changed his views on the subject, and fairly confessed it; but he could not fear that very great injury would accrue to the labouring or middle classes of the country from the present measure, and was rather of opinion that it would tend to give an impetus to that supply of produce whereby our poorer classes were kept in employment. With reference to the opinions expressed by honourable Members in that House, as well as by correspondents of his own, respecting the time in which the Corn Laws should cease, the hon. Gentleman concluded by expressing his opinion that he, for one, believed that they should be removed at once, and thought such an immediate removal would be a very great improvement on the proposed measure, inasmuch as he believed, in that case, there would be less danger of unfair competition and speculation.

Lord C. CHURCHILL believed the country would be reduced to a state of penury, and altogether coincided with the opinions which had been delivered on this question by one of the ablest men that ruled this country, and one of those opinions was based on thirty years' experience of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), and the

other on the experience of but a few months. The early opinions of the right hon. Baronet were certainly more in accordance with his own views, and therefore he was determined to oppose the measure.

Sir W. CLAY said, the noble Lord the Member for West Sussex (the Earl of March) had described the present debate as one-sided. He thought this had partly arisen from the circumstance that, up to a recent period, the speeches of hon. Gentlemen on the other side consisted rather of attacks on the right hon. Gentleman and his Colleagues, than of arguments relating to their measure. In watching the course of this debate, he had been more than once reminded of the well-known anecdote of the country attorney, who, having no case, endorsed on the brief of the leading counsel, "No merits—abuse the plaintiff's attorney." Hon. Gentlemen seemed to forget that they were about to try an issue of importance, not only to this country, but to the world; for it really appeared that they thought they had done enough if they could show that the right hon. Gentleman's course was inconsistent with the policy he had once professed, and contradicted the principles which he had formerly advocated. Nothing, it seemed, was more amusing than personalities: that might be human nature, and assuredly it was the nature of the House of Commons. If in the library one chanced to hear a cheer unusually vehement and prolonged, one was sure to find on inquiry that some hon. Gentleman had said something unpleasant of some other hon. Gentleman. That might be all very amusing and very proper, but perhaps they had too much of it. They might be satisfied with the manner in which that debate had been conducted; but the world at large was not quite satisfied with it. People out of doors did not much admire that perpetual personal recrimination; and he ventured to say, that one single argument which would bear the shock of discussion—one solitary fact showing that the right hon. Gentleman ought not to take the course which he had taken—would have been worth, in the opinion of the public, all the torrents of invective which had been showered on his head. The fact was, that hon. Gentlemen had overdone the matter; they overstated their case, and proved too much against the right hon. Gentleman. For precisely in the degree they proved that he had broken up a noble party, and damaged himself irretrievably in the opinion of the public, precisely in that degree did they show that the right hon. Gentleman could have been actuated by no personal motive, and that he had yielded only to an overwhelming sense of justice and necessity. The hon. Member for Somerset (Mr. W. Miles), however, had on Friday night descended fairly into the arena of discussion, and applied himself to the question before the House. He declared that the Amendment asserted the principle of protection, and undertook to defend the principle of protection to native industry by statistics, arguments, and references to blue books. The hon. Gentleman said, he would not defend protection to agriculture alone: he felt, probably, that to claim protection for agriculture, when protection on all the other great interests was given up, would be invidious; therefore, the hon. Gentleman said he would defend protection generally. It was quite true that the great interests would repudiate his assistance; they did not ask for protection. However, the hon. Gentleman, in a spirit of chivalrous self-devotion, had declared that he would retain protection for all the great interests. In the performance of that task he had not been very successful; but he had failed only where the greatest reasoning powers and the highest eloquence would equally have failed. He only proved himself unable to defend that which was incapable of defence. The hon. Gentleman began by drawing a very vivid picture of the prosperity of the whole country: blessings, he said, were showered down upon every member of the community. The hon. Gentleman argued that all these blessings had arisen under a system of protection; that this country had reached a height of greatness never before attained by any other, under that very system of protection which they were now about to abandon. It appeared to him that there was one important consideration absolutely fatal to the argument of the hon. Gentleman. It was true that we were prosperous; it was not true that we were living under a system of protection. So far from living under a system of uniform protection, nothing on earth could be more unequal. On some products, and those the most important, there was no protection at all; on others, a slight amount of protection was retained; on others a great deal. But what was still more important, for the last thirty years we had been abandoning the system; every measure, from the days of Huskisson, or even previously, for the last twenty or thirty years, had been an in-

fraction of the principle of protection. The system which we were about to abandon! Why, we had abandoned it. If the hon. Gentleman were consistent, he ought to tell us that we could not stop where we were, but that we must retrace our steps, and undo that which we had been doing. He should like to know which of all the great measures of the last thirty years the hon. Gentleman was prepared to advise us to repeal. Would the hon. Gentleman go back to the Corn Law of 1815? Would he restore the East India Company's monopoly — one great stronghold of protection? Would he alter Mr. Huskisson's measures relating to the shipping interest? Would he call upon us to retrace our steps with regard to the silk trade —to wool—to sugar—with respect even to that small matter which used greatly to interest a right hon. Gentleman, now no longer a Member of that House—the duty on apples, and restore protection to the market gardeners? Lastly, would the hon. Gentleman abrogate the Tariff measure of the right hon. Gentleman? If the hon. Gentleman were prepared to abrogate none of those measures—if he meant to say that they were good, and if he were not prepared to support their repeal, he must allow that they were good, he (Sir W. Clay) wished to know with what show of consistency—with what shadow of reason, he called on the House to proceed no further? Did the hon. Gentleman really think he would be obeyed in saying to the advancing tide of public opinion, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further?" All *à priori* and inductive reasoning was in favour of the course which the right hon. Gentleman had proposed for their adoption. On what was the opinion, that we should proceed no further in a course already proved to be successful, grounded? Was it grounded on the abstract excellence of the principle of protection? What was that principle, stated shortly? It was, everybody assisting everybody to pay a little more for everything than it was worth—everybody assisting everybody to misapply their time, capital, and skill—every one assisting every one else to do something that they could not do so well as some other person. If that were not a fair statement of the principle, what was the meaning of protection? If the individual sellers of manufactures could make an article as cheap and good, or cheaper and better, than their foreign rivals, they needed no protection. Protection, therefore, meant nothing more than the several classes of the community protecting each other to misapply their time, capital, and skill. But if that was the abstract principle, what was the inference to be drawn from all experience? He looked in vain among the speeches of hon. Gentlemen opposite for the mention of a single instance in which measures of relaxation had failed of their beneficial results; he looked in vain for a statement of any great interest being injured by measures of a nature similar to the present; all the great interests of the country, such as the cotton, wool, and iron manufactures; all the interests on which the power and wealth of England were based, were essentially unprotected. He believed that the principles of free trade had taken a strong hold of the popular mind, and that the cry of protection to native industry was one that would have very litle effect for the future. The time was past when a mere shuffling of the cards —a robbing of Peter to pay Paul—putting the hand in one breeches pocket for the purpose of filling the other—losing a little by the way—would avail to content the intelligence of the community. It had come to be generally understood that there was no other process by which classes would be prosperous than by the exercise of those qualities by which individuals prospered—industry—ingenuity—frugality — perseverance. Adopt, then, more widely the principles of free trade, and afford to our manufacturers the means of competing with others. It was utterly impossible to protect them: all the great branches of manufacture exported a considerable portion of their produce; that portion could only bear such a price as would enable it to compete with the goods of our rivals; and the price of the portion exported absolutely governed the price in the home market. If competition became so urgent that the price fell, and the fund from which the profits of the manufacturer and the wages of labour were furnished should be diminished; if it was absolutely inevitable that wages should fall, in order that the manufacturers might meet their foreign rivals—how was the necessity of lower wages to be met, but by a decrease in the price of provisions? The hon. Gentleman opposite had stated the main cause of the present prosperity to be the diffusion of money among the manufacturing interest, by the employment of capital in the construction of railroads. He wondered the hon. Gentleman did not discover that the real value of railroads was their opening

a fresh field for the profitable employment of capital, which was the precise object of the measure of the right hon. Baronet. The great difficulty under which England had laboured of late years was, to find a field for the employment of capital. A time was coming when all the field opened by railroads would be exhausted—when all the lines promising a profitable return would have been constructed; and no doubt disappointment and loss would attend many of those persons who had embarked their money in railroad speculation. Then the measure of the right hon. Gentleman would come as a valuable resource to fill up that void, and to furnish additional employment for the capital and labour of the country. The hon. Gentleman said, if this principle were to be carried out, it must be extended to our Colonies; and he (Sir W. Clay) believed that one of the best consequences of adopting the principle would be its extension to our Colonies. Nothing could be more to be deprecated than that we should attempt to continue our connection with the Colonies by a system of inflicting on each other mutual injury, compelling them to buy from us what they could obtain much more cheaply from other countries, and ourselves taking from them what we could obtain on more advantageous terms elsewhere. He wished to see an end put to this system, and would confide in ties created by community of origin, language, and character, to produce commercial intercourse and an interchange of capital which would unite the mother country with its Colonies, without having recourse to a precarious system of monopoly. With respect to our magnificent empire in India, there was nothing he should more regret than to see a new monopoly created there in the production of sugar; he believed it moreover to be unnecessary, for he had great faith in the results that would be produced by the application of British capital and labour to the cultivation of sugar in the vast and fertile Valley of the Ganges. Was it true that the landed interest would be injured by the measure of the right hon. Baronet? He had said more than once, and now upon perhaps the last occasion when the subject would be discussed in that House, he would repeat his solemn conviction, that if there were a single interest in the country more deeply concerned in the abrogation of the Corn Laws than another, it was the landed interest, for the reason, that there was no class so deeply interested in the permanent well-being of the Empire. The manufacturer, at some sacrifice of capital, might take his wealth and skill to other countries; the skilful artisan might quit our shores; but the landowner must of necessity remain, and abide the fortunes of his country. It was because he thought the Corn Laws injurious to the prosperity of the country—injurious to that manufacturing and commercial prosperity which gave the chief value to the land, that he said the landed interest had a deeper and greater concern in their abolition. Would there be even temporary inconvenience to that interest? He believed that no more chimerical idea had ever invaded the minds of men than the imagination that the soil of England would be thrown out of cultivation—that there would be a serious depreciation in the value of land. It was said, there would be a competition by foreign countries which they could not meet; but from what foreign countries would it proceed? Not from France, Belgium, Spain, or Italy; but from a small portion of the north of Germany, and from Russia. Was it possible they could be seriously afraid of the competition of the serfs of Russia and Poland? The English farmer had the best markets in the world close to the very fields he ploughed, not for his corn alone, but markets for his green crop, for his hay and straw—he had abundant capital, and unlimited command of manure; for he had high prices for stock, which enabled him to obain the manure; and was it to be supposed that, with all these advantages, the cultivator of the British soil could not meet the serfs of Russia and Poland, who had none of these advantages, and were exposed also to the disadvantage of having to bring their corn hundreds of miles from the interior to the mouths of the rivers? Mr. Jacobs stated, that to bring wheat from the interior to Dantzic, cost from 6*s.* to 12*s.*; from the interior to Hamburgh, 3*s.* to 10*s.* But the chief supply would come from the Baltic ports; and from these ports the costs of transit to this country would be from 6*s.* to 8*s.* The total cost of transit of Polish corn, therefore, from the place of growth to this country, would on an average be little under 20*s.* the quarter. He (Sir W. Clay) had never contended that an exceedingly low price of corn would be a consequence of repealing the present law. The advantages he anticipated were of a different kind—greater steadiness of price, more employment for the industrious classes,

a more stable connexion between this and all other countries, a much more safe state of our monetary system. As regarded price only, he did not believe that, taking a series of years, it would be under 45*s*. He believed that the landed interest might rest perfectly secure: they were already in possession of a great natural monopoly; and they needed not a factitious and a legislative one. Hon. Members opposite must be sensible that they were fighting this battle without heart and without hope. ["Oh, oh!" "No!"] Why, he did not believe that one of them seriously thought they would be successful in the contest. It would be wise in them to meet free trade manfully, and act as public opinion required; and he believed that, in a pecuniary point of view, they had nothing to apprehend. Let the landlords lay out capital judiciously, or give leases, enabling those who held land under them to do so—let the tenant-farmers employ skill, industry, frugality, perseverance, science—and the agricultural interest had nothing to fear from the competition to which they were about to be subjected. He and those who thought with him might, perhaps, have been forgiven if they had indulged in a not unnatural, and, he trusted, not unworthy, exultation at seeing the measure they had so long advocated brought forward under auspices which ensured its triumphant success, by the very men by whom it had been so pertinaciously opposed; but the question was far too momentous to afford a fitting opportunity for personal or party triumph; and he would give his hearty support to a measure which he believed was calculated to confer great benefits upon the entire community, and to open to this country a prospect of greater prosperity than she had ever yet enjoyed.

Mr. L. W. BUCK, as the Representative of one of the most influential agricultural counties in the kingdom, was determined to give his decided vote against a measure which was well calculated to spread alarm and dismay in every agricultural district. He did not merely consider the proposed measure of the right hon. Baronet as one which should in its evil effects be solely confined to the agricultural interests, as it would also affect the industrious of every class in the country. It was unfortunately no longer a question with the country whether they were to have a fixed duty or the sliding-scale, as what was now being proposed should ultimate in total repeal; and which he was most firmly convinced would seriously affect the native industry of all classes, particularly of the agricultural classes. How could English agricultural labourers stand in competition with Poland or Russia? How could they compete with the cheaper countries of Europe? It was out of the question. The enormous amount of capital now expending in the construction of railways might meet the present exigency, and prevent depression; but subsequently what could they expect but want and ruin? It had been stated the measure would benefit the poorer classes; but he had the most indubitable evidence to show that whenever wheat was high, poverty was low; but that when wheat was low, poverty was great. Let those who lived in the country, and who knew the practical working of agricultural pursuits, who knew what concerned the interests of the people, and who knew the thoughts of the people on the subject—let them fearlessly give their opinion; and it must be an opinion in opposition to the policy of the right hon. Baronet as regarded the Corn Laws; because it was a measure which, if carried out, would be to the injury of the labouring classes; and being persuaded of this, it was no wonder that the agricultural interests were alarmed. Were they to contrast the joy which had been depicted on every countenance when the late dissolution of the Ministry was known, with the gloom which now overspread them because of the present aspect of affairs; such a view would afford some criterion as to those internal feelings which were at work in contemplating a measure which was to annihilate those Acts of Parliament which had existed for hundreds of years, and which produced such prosperity by the protection they afforded to the landed interests. It was well known that the majorities which the right hon. Baronet had in former Sessions, were majorities founded upon one given principle; namely, that of protection. He did not hesitate to say that from the year 1829 until the year 1835, the right hon. Baronet had not the confidence of the Conservative party. In 1835, however, he appealed to the Conservative Associations in the country; he identified himself with them; he told them that they were to work out their cause at the registrations—that there was the ground on which their battle should be fought; but although the right hon. Baronet had identified himself with those associations as closely and as strongly as possible, and when they secured to him the large majority of ninety, when they thought they had in him a great leader in which they could place the utmost, the most

implicit confidence, who could have imagined that the right hon. Baronet would have deserted the very interest which fixed him in power—who could have imagined that he would now become the supporter of principles even more liberal than those which were brought forward by a noble Lord? Or was it to be supposed that had it been known by the country that the right hon. Baronet would have proposed those liberal measures, such a large majority would have been returned to that House? Contrast the language of the right hon. Baronet in 1842 on the subject of grain, with his conduct now, when he came forward with this measure of free trade—a measure which he would venture to affirm, did it pass, would be the ruin of the renting farmers in the kingdom. Numbers reposed confidence in the statements of the right hon. Baronet in 1842, when he told the country that he did not wish wheat to be above 60*s.* or below 54*s.*, and agriculturists acted on that intimation; but in the face of such declarations now the measure of free trade was propounded, and which, if it succeeded in that House, would greatly affect the amount of capital that had been sunk in land. Look at the moment the right hon. Baronet had taken to bring forward his free-trade measures—when Russia had shut her ports against us—at a time when there did not exist on the Continent one feeling of reciprocity towards this country. Such was the time taken to introduce a measure which he ventured to state would throw out of cultivation thousands of acres of land, and which would deprive of employment numbers of the labouring classes. That morning he had a conversation with a most respectable farmer, who resided in the neighbourhood of Exeter; he rented a farm of 500 acres of land, for which he paid 700*l.* a year. He asked that farmer, "What would be his position on the new arrangement?" His answer was very significant, "He would lose about a pound, and get about a shilling." He was asked another question, "What was the average expense in labour?" His reply was, "About 780*l.* a year." "And what do you intend to do, if the free-trade measure pass?" "Depend upon it," said the farmer, "the result will be that we shall be obliged to convert the arable land into pasture; and thus give up that most expensive part of farming, which was labour." He (Mr. Buck) was quite certain that would be too generally the result; and, therefore, he would ask what was to be done with that mass of people who would be thus thrown out of employment? He did not think the Government should leave the country so much in the dark, and the Government should state precisely what they were about to do; and he did hope the right hon. Baronet would give the House some precise explanation about a measure which he (Mr. Buck) was convinced would inflict a serious injury—if it were allowed to pass—which he hoped it would not; and if its fate depended on his vote, it certainly should not. He was told that they were no longer to have protection. If that were to be so, then he would call on the Government to remove those burdens which were acknowledged, over and over again, to press on the land. As every possible assistance and facility were afforded to the manufacturing interests, he would call on the Government to pursue the same course towards the landed interest. Let the product of the land be, at least, as well protected as the other; for, depend upon it, one thing was certain, that the Government would not allay that spirit which at present existed in the country, unless they conceded every act of justice which was fairly due to the landed proprietors. It was his opinion that no Government should have yielded to the clamour of one of the most unconstitutional associations that ever existed; which had its emissaries travelling through the country, exciting the feelings of the people by drawing the most appalling pictures of famine and distress; and that at a moment when Providence had blessed all with abundance—from one extremity of the country to the other—with the exception of what occurred in Ireland as regarded the potato disease. The measure should have his decided negative. He believed it to be an unjust and injurious measure; and he hoped every Member at all connected with the landed interest would reflect well before he would give his support to Her Majesty's Government, on a question of such vital importance to the country.

Lord H. VANE stated that he had invariably given his adhesion to the general principles of commercial policy proposed by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and had supported some of his recent measures, in accordance with those principles. He did not wish to deny that the measure now proposed by the Government was very different from anything he had anticipated in 1841. He fairly confessed that, although he was convinced at that time of

the necessity of some reduction of the duties on agricultural produce, in common with other articles, he did not then think of advocating a total repeal of the protective duties. He thought, then, that there would be great danger of agricultural labourers being thrown out of employment, which, however, he did not now apprehend to the extent which some Gentlemen anticipated. He had thought, also, that a greater deterioration of the value of land would be occasioned by such a measure than he now considered likely to occur. He was, however, even now, of opinion that a low fixed duty would be a wise arrangement if the circumstances of the country admitted of it. He believed that a low fixed duty would be equally advantageous to all the great interests of the country—commercial, manufacturing, and agricultural; that it would have served as a temporary compromise, would have allayed discontent, and removed fears which might be unfounded, but which certainly were very extensively felt; and he again confessed that he regretted the abandonment of a fixed duty. He admitted that there were burdens which pressed heavily upon the land. He could not help thinking that the Poor Law pressed more heavily upon the land than upon other interests. Nor was he singular in that opinion; for it was one entertained by some of the most eminent political writers the country had produced. Mr. M'Culloch was decidedly of that opinion; and therefore, in order to meet these peculiar burdens, he (Lord H. Vane) should have abandoned a fixed duty with greater regret if the circumstances of the country admitted of its maintenance. He believed, however, that the time for compromise was now gone by. He did not believe that a settlement of the question could now be arrived at but by the adoption of such a measure as the right hon. Baronet now proposed. He thought the measure not without its imperfections. He did not anticipate from it all the good that was promised; neither, on the other hand, did he apprehend all the evil that was threatened. With regard to cheapness of food for the labouring classes, no doubt that was a primary object, and there was no Gentleman in that House who would not approve of that object, whatever might he his opinions of the merits in other respects of the measure by which it was to be accomplished. With regard to the artisan and the manufacturer, it would be difficult to maintain—and he did not believe that any one did maintain—that this measure would not be beneficial to them. With respect to the agricultural labourer, he admitted the question was different; but, after the statements made by the right hon. the Secretary at War, as to the state of a great portion of the agricultural population in that important agricultural county, Wiltshire, his opinion was, that their condition would be little altered. He could not anticipate much amelioration in their circumstances; but he certainly did not look forward to much deterioration. If the agriculturist, by greater attention to tillage, brought his lands into a higher state of cultivation, there would be a greater demand for labour, and the pecuniary wages of labour would to a certain extent be raised in consequence. An hon. Member had described in eloquent terms the melancholy case of the tenant-farmer who had been so long attached to the soil, and who, at last, was to be driven from the profitable occupation of it by this measure. He did not see why the tenant-farmer should not avail himself of the same resources which the manufacturer had adopted with so much success, and improve his land by the application of skill and industry, and the use of those natural means of improvement from which he would derive greater benefit than from any artificial aid which legislation could afford. He had heard with great pleasure a sentiment uttered by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, which, although in perfect disagreement with arguments used by him on other occasions, he had, in the course of these discussions, pronounced emphatically, giving the weight of his sanction to the authority from which it was borrowed. The sentiment was, "Take care of the imports, and the exports will take care of themselves." If we adopted a wholesome system of commercial policy, we need fear no hostile tariffs; we should thereby throw down all the barriers that might have been raised against us, and our goods would find their way to other countries all over the globe, notwithstanding the obstacles which other nations might heretofore have thought fit to present to the admission of our manufactures. He would put it to his hon. Friends on the other side whether they could hope successfully to resist the combination of parties and of statesmen opposed to them. For his part, he believed that that protection which agriculture at present enjoyed, could not by any possibility be maintained. He confessed that his

opinions on the subject had undergone a change. But he believed that it would be unworthy of him to attempt to maintain his consistency when his views upon a subject of such great importance were altered, and especially in the present circumstances of the country. Entertaining these opinions, he would conclude by expressing a hope that this measure would have for its effect to dissipate many prejudices; to bring together hostile classes, and blend them into a united people; and that it would thereby conduce to the peace, the contentment, the happiness, and the glory of this great Empire.

Sir J. TYRRELL could assure the House that, feeling as he did that this question had been debated to death by both sides of the House, and by the country, it was with the greatest reluctance that he ventured to trespass upon it for its indulgence; but he congratulated the House that at the expiration of the fifth night of the debate, the Anti-Corn-Law League should have thought proper to come to the rescue of their friends; and it was also a matter of congratulation to him that they had not been able, so far as he could ascertain, to add any new argument, or to state any new case that had not over and over again been brought forward in Covent Garden and the country. They added no arguments to those which had already made such an impression on the right hon. Baronet sitting near him. He would allude to what had been stated by the hon. Member for Manchester, with respect to his friend and his sixty-two farmers; and would state that they were not able to make a very satisfactory arrangement with their landlords, until the hon. Member for Manchester dared to assure them that the prices of corn would not be materially affected by the new arrangement. He rose, principally, to notice a statement of the noble Lord the Member for London, made in the early part of the debate; namely, in gloating over the fallen fortune of the great party that sat near him, the noble Lord was pleased to impute the most unfair motives to hon. Gentlemen who had resisted the Motion of the Member for Sheffield, for an inquiry into the peculiar burdens on land. He understood the noble Lord to say, that we doubted our own statistics, and sheltered ourselves under cases the most plausible. He thought it right that the House and the country should be aware of the real history of that case; and in those days of confession, of explanation, and of political tergiversation, that he also should be permitted to offer his confession and his explanation. It was perfectly well understood in that House, that the Motion of the hon. Member for Sheffield was what is called a clap-trap Motion, The right hon. Baronet who then had the confidence of the party to which he alluded, felt the force of the Motion, adopted a course on that occasion, by calling thirty or forty Members of the agricultural interest together for the purpose of ascertaining what their views were with reference to the Motion to which he alluded. He thought it would be an act of bare justice in the right hon. Baronet at that side of the House fairly to state the case as it took place. The agricultural Members expressed their willingness to accede to the Motion, and said that there was nothing in it that they ought to shrink from, and that they were prepared for the most searching investigation; and they were highly complimented by the right hon. Baronet on their readiness to accede to the Motion. And then the House might fairly ask, "why not grant it?" The right hon. Baronet said he saw no advantage in assenting to it; that it was a clap-trap Motion, and would be only productive of wrangling about principles; that the interests of the country would be disturbed; and that expectations would be held out that were not likely to be realized; and on that ground he should meet it by a direct negative. It was under these circumstances that the Motion was resisted by the right hon. Baronet, who had been represented now as inflicting the greatest disadvantage on them by permitting them to state their own case; which case he (Sir J. Tyrrell) was not ashamed of. And the House and the country must admit that the case had been stated with the greatest ability by many hon. Members at his side of the House. The calculation of the right hon. Baronet and the rest of Her Majesty's Government was, that they might infuse opinion into the minds of their followers, and that the measure would pass through the House without any great disturbance of party. In entering on the arguments used in this case, it was impossible to avoid personal attacks and personal considerations, because the right hon. Baronet so far identified himself with the Government, that scarcely any other Member of the Cabinet was permitted to address the House. One would have thought that they were ready to offer explanations as well; but instead of that they had to complain that the right hon. Member for Wiltshire (Mr. S. Her-

bert) had thought fit, on two occasions, to lecture the country Gentlemen as to the course they ought to take. He could well understand the policy of putting forward that intelligent statesman. It was true the right hon. Member was always ready on such occasions, and he believed the House always gave the Member for Wiltshire credit for the most sincere and conscientious convictions. As in the army they put forward a deserter in the front rank, so he could quite undestand the policy of putting forward the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Wiltshire (Mr. S. Herbert) to lecture them. It was said that this measure was offered as a great settlement; but without going into its details, it was quite unreasonable, on the face of it, to expect that they should be content to accept of worse terms than had been offered to them repeatedly by the hon. Member for Stockport. He regretted he did not see the hon. Gentleman in his place, and he regretted the supposed cause of his absence. So far from the present measure being a settlement of the question, many moons would not pass over before the noble Lord opposite would come forward on the question of the differential duties on sugar; and on what ground was it expected that he could be resisted? He thought it was a matter to be deplored that the noble Lord, who had so much credit with the House and the country, and the hon. Member for Stockport, should be seized with a kind of *delirium tremens* at the right hon. Baronet. The noble Lord, who took such high ground in Scotland, was obliged to get upon a mole-hill when he came to London, and shrunk from forming his Administration; and it was a matter of surprise and regret that the hon. Member for Stockport, who acted as a kind of crutch for the great leaders to lean upon, had shrunk from accepting office when an opportunity occurred for him to carry out his views. He regretted that the hon. Gentleman had lost that opportunity of carrying out his views, because they were more comprehensive than the views of the right hon. Gentleman, and were worthy of the strong mind which he possessed. He had prophesied that the sugar duties would fall. He was now about to enter into a grave subject, and would make another prophecy. Anything falling from him might perhaps have little force; still it was a most extraordinary prophecy. This prophecy was made ten years ago, by one of the most able and learned divines of this country—it was made by a doctor of divinity—by a man who had the respect and esteem and admiration of the right hon. Baronet who sat on that bench;—he meant the late Dr. Arnold. He was sure that, though they might smile at anything which fell from him—that however unworthy he might be to occupy the attention of the House—they would listen with respect to the opinion of Dr. Arnold. In that work of his lately published, there was an extraordinary prophecy with regard to the right hon. Baronet, and if the House would permit him, especially as he seldom read quotations, he would read this prophecy; and he regretted to say, there was too much reason to fear that the remaining portion of it would be fulfilled. Dr. Arnold, in November, 1836, says—

> "I pray for strength of mind, for strength of mind for my children, for this reason, that they may be able at least to appreciate truth keenly. When a man does that honestly, things become comparatively easy, as, for instance, Peel has a strong idea about the currency—and a distinct impression about it, and therefore upon that ground I would trust him that he would not yield to clamour; but upon most other matters, the Church more especially, he seems to have no idea; therefore I would not trust him that he would not give up all to-morrow if the clamour were loud enough."

The right hon. Baronet laid claim the other night to the approbation of posterity. Now, he wished the right hon. Baronet no harm; but he thought the sooner he had an opportunity, the sooner posterity had an opportunity, of forming an opinion of the merits of the right hon. Baronet, the better. He was of course speaking politically. He had no doubt posterity would do the right hon. Gentleman the most ample justice. But when the noble Lord opposite explained to them that the right hon. Baronet was conspiring with him to give over the agricultural interest and that great party into the hands of the noble Lord and the Anti-Corn-Law League, he was reminded of a passage in ancient history which he would take the liberty of citing. When Cassius contemplated the betrayal of Cæsar, he did not dare to do so till he had first gained over "the noble Brutus" to the cause; and so the right hon. Baronet would not have dared to propose this measure for the consideration of the House, till he had first gained the opinion of that great warrior, the Duke of Wellington. Be that as it might, it was his sincere conviction, that if the House of Commons proceeded to abolish the Corn Law, and if the House of Lords proceeded to register the verdict, in those times of

democratic tendencies and waning authority, the ties between the lower, the middle, and the higher classes would be broken, and not that alone, but throughout that great portion of the British community, which had hitherto spread traditional barriers between democratic lawlessness and affectionate loyalty, would spread a fear for coronets, for aristocracies and hierarchies, which the steadiest trade in corn, and the happiest commercial relations between this country and America, would not be able to dispel.

Mr. JAMES was now as he had always been, a supporter of the repeal of the Corn Laws. An attempt had been made to connect the question of the sugar duties with the question before the House, both by the hon. Member for the Tower Hamlets, and the hon. Member who had last spoken. It seemed to him to be the more convenient course to keep those questions separate; but he would say, he did not think there was any inconsistency in being a free trader in corn, and not being a free trader in sugar. He did not assert that without authority—that of Mr. M'Gregor, who said, that the sugar question was so mixed up with slavery and the Slave Trade, that it ought to be taken out of the category of free-trade measures. He did not hope to offer any new arguments on the question. He thought the arguments upon this question were worn threadbare. In the early part of the debate, many hon. Gentleman treated the question with a sort of funeral oration upon the Corn Laws, and stated the fearful and direful forebodings which they entertained as to the consequences likely to result from their abolition; in which apprehensions he for one could not anticipate. If the House would allow him, he would refer briefly to the progress of public opinion upon this subject within the last few years, showing that in a good cause it was never necessary to despair; but that measures founded upon just, sound, and comprehensive principles were sure, sooner or later, to succeed. In 1831, he had the honour to second the Motion in his place in that House for a total repeal of the Corn Laws. He then had the honour to make use of several of the arguments which had been of late so much employed, and were so deservedly popular at Manchester and other parts of the country. The Motion in 1831, was proposed by the hon. Member for Preston, Mr. Hunt; and what was the opinion of the House upon that occasion? Only one solitary hon. Member, Colonel Torrens, then Member for Bolton, was found to support the Motion in debate; and upon division the Motion was lost by a majority of 194 to 6. And who did they suppose moved the previous question. Why his hon. Friend the Member for Montrose; and he was supported, among others, by the right hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Robert Peel, the noble Lord the Member for London, and every other Member now present in the House who was then it, except the hon. Member for East Somersetshire (Colonel Gore Langton). The hon. Member for Finsbury happened, from some cause or other, to be absent upon the occasion. The hon. Member did not oppose the Motion upon its merits, but merely that he thought the time had not arrived for it—and that if persevered in, it would interfere with the Reform Bill—and because he thought public opinion was not then ripe enough for it. But seeing what had since passed in the political world, was he not justified in congratulating the House and the country upon the extraordinary change that had come over the spirit of the dream, in the minds of almost all the most distinguished of public men on this most momentous question? He rejoiced at their conversion, and more particularly at the conversion of Sir R. Peel. He could not for one moment imagine that the right hon. Baronet was actuated by any but the most sincere conviction that the interests of the country required that the question should be settled. For his own part he entertained the same opinions as he had advocated ever since he entered that House twenty-six years since, and he thought the general interests of the country demanded that the Corn Laws should be repealed. He did not think it would be acting unfair to the agricultural interest to repeal them, or that they would do that injustice to the agriculturist which some hon. Member seemed to imagine. This, however, he would say, that the abolition of the Corn Laws, and the admission of foreign corn, without restriction, would be essentially conducive to the well-being, contentment and happiness of the struggling masses of this densely peopled country. He hoped the Government proposition, would be with such a large majority in that House, as would secure the passing of the measure triumphantly in another place, which the strict rules of that House forbade him from naming. In conclusion, he expressed his de-

termination that no vote of his should be given to any Amendment brought forward by any party, with a view to endanger the safety of the measure before the House, but should give his warmest support to the proposition of Her Majesty's Government.

Sir R. PEEL then rose and spoke as follows:—Mr. Speaker, Two matters of great importance have occupied the attention of the House during this protracted debate—the one, the manner in which a party should be conducted; the other, the measures by which an imminent public calamity shall be mitigated, and the principles by which the commercial policy of a great Empire shall for the future be governed. On the first point, the manner in which a party should be conducted, by far the greater part of this debate has turned. I do not undervalue its importance; but, great as it is, surely it is subordinate in the eyes of a people to that other question to which I have referred—the precautions to be taken against impending scarcity, and the principles by which your commercial policy shall hereafter be governed. On the party question I have little defence to make. Yes, Sir, these are I admit at once, the worst measures for party interests that could have brought forward. I admit also that it is unfortunate that the conduct of this measure, so far as the Corn Laws are concerned, should be committed to my hands. It would, no doubt, have been far preferable, that those should have the credit, if credit there be, for an adjustment of the Corn Laws, who have been uniform and consistent opponents of those laws. That which prevented myself and those who concurred with me from committing it at once to other hands, was the firm conviction under which we laboured, that a part of this Empire was threatened with a great calamity. I did firmly believe, I do firmly believe, that that there is impending over you a calamity that all will deplore. I did think that while there was that danger, and while I had the hopes of averting it, it would not be consistent with my duty to my Sovereign, or with the honour of a public man, to take that opportunity of shrinking from the heavy responsibilities which it imposed. While I retained the hope of acting with a united Administration, while I thought there was a prospect of bringing this question to a settlement, I determined to retain office and incur its responsibilities. When I was compelled to abandon that hope (my sense of the coming evil remaining the same), I took the earliest opportunity, consistent with a sense of duty and of public honour, of tendering my resignation to the Queen, and leaving Her Majesty the full opportunity of consulting other advisers. I offered no opinion as to the choice of a successor. That is almost the only act which is the personal act of the Sovereign; it is for the Sovereign to determine in whom Her confidence shall be placed. It was, indeed, my duty to ascertain, by the command of the Queen, whether those of my Colleagues who had dissented from me were either themselves prepared to form a Government, or to advise Her Majesty, if they themselves were not prepared, to commit to other hands the formation of a Government—a Government, I mean, to be composed of public men favourable to the maintenance of the existing Corn Law. Those from whom I differed, who had not concurred with me either as to the full extent of the danger to be apprehended, or as to the policy of altering the law, signified their opinion that it would not be for the public interests that they should form a Government; nor could they advise Her Majesty to resort to others for the formation of a Government founded on the maintenance of the existing Corn Law. Her Majesty determined to call upon the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) to undertake the duty of forming an Administration. My firm belief was, that the noble Lord would have undertaken that duty; my firm persuasion was—the noble Lord will excuse me for saying so—that he would have succeeded if he had undertaken it. During the long course of my opposition to the noble Lord, I cannot charge myself with having ever said anything disrespectful of him. We have acted against each other for many years, and I don't recollect anything that ever passed between us likely to engender hostile or acrimonious feelings. But I must say, the noble Lord did disappoint me when he did not at once undertake the formation of a Government on the principle of adjusting this question: When my tender of resignation had been accepted, and when the noble Lord had been sent for by the Queen, I considered myself at perfect liberty to act in a private capacity on my own personal sense of the public interests, and my own feelings of public duty. I knew all the difficulties with which any man would have to contend who undertook the conduct of the Government. I knew there must be a great dislocation of parties. In the firm persuasion

that the noble Lord would accept the office of First Minister, I felt it incumbent upon me, under the special circumstances under which he would have undertaken office, to diminish the difficulties with which he might have to contend in attempting a final settlement of the Corn Laws. I resolved, therefore, to give the noble Lord such assurances of support as it was in my power to give. In the explanation which I offered the other night, I limited myself to a detail of the facts which had preceded my retirement from office. The noble Lord's explanation commenced from that period. Of that explanation I have no complaint whatever to make. It was perfectly fair and candid on the part of the noble Lord. But there are additions to it which I am desirous of supplying, in the hope of being enabled to demonstrate that I had no wish to defraud others of the credit of adjusting the Corn Laws. My resignation of office was accepted by Her Majesty on the 6th of December last. On the 8th December, I addressed to Her Majesty the following communication, for the express purpose of enabling Her Majesty, by the knowledge of my views and intentions with regard to the Corn Laws, to diminish the difficulties of my successor :—

"Whitehall, Dec. 8, 1845.

"Sir Robert Peel presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and, influenced by no other motive than the desire to contribute, if possible, to the relief of Your Majesty from embarrassment, and to the protection of the public interests from injury, is induced to make to Your Majesty this confidential communication explanatory of Sir Robert Peel's position and intentions with regard to the great question which is now agitating the public mind.

"Your Majesty can, if you think fit, make this communication known to the Minister who, as successor to Sir Robert Peel, may be honoured by Your Majesty's confidence.

"On the 1st of November last, Sir Robert Peel advised his Colleagues, on account of the alarming accounts from Ireland, and many districts in this country, as to the failure of the potato crop from disease, and for the purpose of guarding against contingencies, which in his opinion were not improbable, humbly to recommend to Your Majesty that the duties on the import of foreign grain should be suspended for a limited period, either by Order in Council or by Legislative Enactment; Parliament, in either case, being summoned without delay.

"Sir Robert Peel foresaw that this suspension, fully justified by the tenor of the report to which he has referred, would compel, during the interval of suspension, the reconsideration of the Corn Laws.

"If the opinions of his Colleagues had then been in concurrence with his own, he was fully prepared to take the responsibility of suspension —and of the necessary consequence of suspension, a comprehensive review of the laws imposing restrictions on the import of foreign grain and other articles of food, with a view to their gradual diminution and ultimate removal.

"He was disposed to recommend that any new laws to be enacted should contain within themselves the principle of gradual reduction and final repeal.

"Sir Robert Peel is prepared to support, in a private capacity, measures which may be in general conformity with those which he advised as a Minister.

"It would be unbecoming in Sir Robert Peel to make any reference to the details of such measures.

"Your Majesty has been good enough to inform Sir Robert Peel that it is your intention to propose to Lord John Russell to undertake the formation of a Government.

"The principle on which Sir Robert Peel was prepared to recommend the reconsideration of the laws affecting the import of the main articles of food was in general accordance with that referred to in the concluding paragraph of Lord John Russell's letter to the electors of the city of London.

"Sir Robert Peel wished to accompany the removal of restriction on the admission of such articles with relief to the land from any charges that may be unduly onerous, and with such other provisions as, in the terms of Lord John Russell's letter, 'caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest.'

"Sir Robert Peel will support measures founded on that general principle, and will exercise any influence he may possess to promote their success."

That was the assurance I conveyed to Her Majesty of my perfect readiness to support, if proposed by others, those measures which I had myself deemed necessary. I could not but foresee that in addition to all the other difficulties with which the noble Lord or any other Minister would have to contend, there would be some connected with the state of our revenue and expenditure. At the close of the present financial year there will probably be, as there has been in the years preceding, a considerable surplus of revenue after providing for the wants of the public service. In the coming year there must be increased estimates, reducing the future surplus, and I thought it right that my successor should not be exposed to the risk of an unfavourable contrast for which he could not be responsible. I added, therefore, to my assurance of support with respect to the Corn Laws this further assurance. It refers to points of great delicacy, but it is better to have no concealment or reserve.

"Sir Robert Peel feels it to be his duty to add that, should Your Majesty's future advisers, after consideration of the heavy demands made upon the army of this country for colonial service, of our relations with the United States, and of the

bearing which steam navigation may have upon maritime warfare and the defence of the country, deem it advisable to propose an addition to the army and increased naval and military estimates, Sir Peel Robert will support the proposal—will do all that he can to prevent it from being considered as indicative of hostile or altered feelings towards France, and will assume, for the increase in question, any degree of responsibility, present or retrospective, which can fairly attach to him."

Now, when it is charged on me, that I am robbing others of the credit which is justly due to them, I hope that this explanation of the course I pursued, when I was acting under the firmest persuasion that the adjustment of this question would be committed to others, may tend to prove that I was not desirous of robbing others of the credit of settling this question, or of trying to embarrass their course. There were further communications made, and in the course of those communications it was proposed to put me in possession of the particular mode in which the noble Lord intended to arrange this question. I thought that it would be better that I should not be made acquainted with such details. I thought that my knowledge of them, or any appearance of concert between the noble Lord and myself, would have had the tendency rather to prejudice than promote the adjustment of this question. I, therefore, declined to receive the communication of those details; but I think that the noble Lord must have been satisfied that, though I declined to concert particular measures with him, yet it was my intention to give to the noble Lord, in his attempt to adjust this question according to his own views of public policy, that same cordial support which it is his boast he now intends to give me. I believe that must have been the impression of the noble Lord—[Lord J. RUSSELL: Hear, hear!]—because, after the communications with me, the noble Lord undertook the formation of a Government; and I am sure that the noble Lord will admit that no act of mine caused the failure of the noble Lord's attempt, and that I was in no way concerned in the reasons which induced the noble Lord finally to abandon it. I made no inquiry as to the persons who should constitute the new Government; I had no personal objections of any kind. My conviction was, that this question ought to be adjusted. I was prepared to facilitate its adjustment by others by my vote, and by the exercise of whatever influence I could command. So much for my conduct towards political opponents—better entitled than myself to undertake the repeal of the Corn Laws.

Now, Sir, with respect to the course which I have pursued towards those who so long have given me their support. I admit to them that it is but natural that they should withhold from me their confidence. I admit that the course which I am pursuing is at variance with the principles on which party is ordinarily conducted. But I do ask of them, whether it be probable that I would sacrifice their favourable opinion and their support unless I was influenced by urgent considerations of public duty—unless I was deeply impressed with the necessity of taking these precautions, and advising these measures. Notwithstanding that which may have passed in this debate—notwithstanding the asperity with which some have spoken, I will do that party (which has hitherto supported me) the justice they deserve. No person can fill the situation I fill without being aware of the motives by which a great party is influenced. I must have an opportunity of knowing what are the personal objects of those around me; and this I will say, notwithstanding the threatened forfeiture of their confidence, that I do not believe (speaking generally of the great body of the party) that there ever existed a party influenced by more honourable and disinterested feelings.

While I admit that a natural consequence of the course I have pursued, is to offend, probably to alienate, a great party, I am not the less convinced that any other course would have been ultimately injurious even to party interests. I know what would have conciliated temporary confidence. It would have been to underrate the danger in Ireland, to invite a united combination for the maintenance of the existing Corn Law, to talk about hoisting the flag of protection for native industry, to insist that agricultural protection should be maintained in all its integrity—by such a course I should have been sure to animate and please a party, and to gain for a time their cordial approbation. But the month of May will not arrive without demonstrating that I should thereby have abandoned my duty to my country—to my Sovereign—ay, and to the Conservative party. I had, and have, the firm persuasion that the present temper of the public mind—the state of public feeling, and of public opinion, with respect to the Corn Laws—independent of all adventitious circumstances, make the defence of the

Corn Laws a very difficult task. But with such a calamity as that which is impending in Ireland, it was utterly irreconcilable with my feelings to urge the landed interest to commit themselves to a conflict for the maintenance inviolate of a law which attaches at the present time a duty of 17*s.* to the quarter of wheat. What were the facts which came under the cognizance of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, charged with the responsibility of providing for the public peace, and rescuing millions from the calamity of starvation? We were assured in one part of this Empire there are 4,000,000 of the Queen's subjects dependent on a certain article of food for subsistence. We knew that on that article of food no reliance could be placed. It was difficult to say what was the extent of the danger—what would be the progress of the disease, and what the amount of deficiency in the supply of that article of food. But, surely, you will make allowances for those who were charged with the heaviest responsibility, if their worst anticipations should be realized by the event. We saw, in the distance, the gaunt forms of famine, and of disease following in the train of famine. Was it not our duty to the country, ay, our duty to the party that supported us, to avert the odious charge of indifference and neglect of timely precautions? It is absolutely necessary, before you come to a final decision on this question, that you should understand this Irish case. You must do so. The reading of letters may be distasteful to you; but you shall have no ground for imputing it to me that I left you in ignorance of a danger which I believe to be imminent. I may have lost your confidence—I will not try to regain it at the expense of truth. I can conciliate no favour by the expression of regret for the course I have taken. So far from it, I declare, in the face of this House that the day of my public life, which I look back on with the greatest satisfaction and pride, is that 1st of November last, when I offered to take the responsibility of issuing an Order in Council to open the ports, and to trust to you for approval and indemnity. I wished then, that by the first packet which sailed after the 1st of November, the news might have gone forth that the ports were open. The primary object of such a measure, of course, would have been to increase the supply of food, and to take precautions against famine, although other collateral advantages might have flowed from it. Had we opened the ports, and had our anticipations proved to be incorrect—had the result shown that we had formed a false estimate of this danger—I believe that the generosity of Parliament would have protected us from censure. ["Hear, hear."] That would have been the case had our anticipations proved to be wrong; but what is the fact? During the latter part of December and January, there was a temporary suspension of alarm, after the opinions we had received from men eminent in science. I never shared in the sanguine hopes that there would be abundance of food, that the potato disease was exaggerated, and that we might safely trust to existing supplies. I felt that the time would arrive when the opinions of those individuals would be justified. And what is the fact? I will read to you some communications, not so much for the vindication of the Government as for the guidance of your own future course. It is not right that I should leave you in ignorance of the real facts of this case. ["Hear, hear."] It is true the present proposition is not a suspension of the duties, but it is a virtual suspension. It comprehends the removal of the duty on maize and rice, and the reduction of the duty to a nominal amount on barley and oats, and the reduction of the duty on wheat from 17*s.* to 4*s.* Before you decide on rejecting or delaying this measure, hear and consider the reports which the last few days have brought from Ireland. You seemed to discredit the reports of official authorities; and some, I regret to say, countenanced the notion that public men were base enough to act in concert for the purpose of exaggeration. I will now read, therefore, no reports from the Lord Lieutenant. I will read letters which the last two mails have brought from Ireland, from men from whose statements you cannot have the pretence of withholding confidence. I will first read a communication from Sir David Roche, who was for some time Member for the city of Limerick. He was one of those who at first thought the apprehension of famine to be greatly exaggerated, and that extraordinary precautions were unnecessary. This day has brought me this letter from him, dated Carass, near Limerick, Feb. 11:—

"No person was more disposed than I was to look with hope to that part of the potato crop in this country that appeared sound before Christmas. I thought it was quite safe and certain to

keep in the usual way, and in my answer to the Lord Lieutenant's circular I stated that hope with great confidence, adding that the crop was so large, the sound portion would nearly feed the people." (This, then, is a disinterested authority.) "But I grieve to say, that every day convinces me of the error I was under; the potatoes that were apparently sound then, had more or less the disease in an incipient state, and the greater part is now obliged to be given to pigs and cattle, to save the owners from total loss. The Catholic clergy of several parishes have made this painful communication to me; my own experience as a landed proprietor and a practical farmer, holding in my possession large animal farms in three different parts of this county, and also in the county Clare, entirely corresponds with their statements. I don't think by the 1st of May next, that out of one hundred acres of potatoes on my land, sound seed will be left me for next year's crop.

"If the case is so bad with me, and it is nearly the same in the four districts I allude to, how much worse must it be with the poor, who have not the convenience and aid that large farming establishments, with substantial buildings, can command? In short, as one rides through the country, rotten potatoes are to be seen everywhere in large quantities by the side of the roads; pits, lately turned, in most cases much smaller than the heaps of rotten potatoes alongside them; and those in the pits are certain, if not quickly consumed, to share in the general decay.

"Such, Sir, is the state I may say of the entire country. No doubt for six or seven weeks, while the remains of the potatoes last, destitution will not be general; but I pray you, Sir, look to it in time."

There were some of us who did look to it in time, and I wish that our advice had been acted on. That is the Report from the county of Limerick. I now come to the Queen's County. The following is a copy of a Report, received February 12, 1846:—

"Queen's County, Stradbally, Feb. 11, 1846.

"With reference to the potato disease, I beg to state that I was requested by Sir Edward Walsh and Sir A. Weldon, two magistrates of this district, to make a more searching inquiry into the state of the potatoes in the neighbourhood of the collieries than had hitherto been made. The instructions were, to make the examination by properties, and ruled forms were supplied by Sir A. Weldon, with such headings as he considered applicable to the case.

"On Monday morning, the 9th, I proceeded to Wolfhill, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Emerson, the clergyman of the parish, and commenced with the property of Mr. Hovenden. Mr. Hovenden himself being with us, we examined every house on the property, took down the number of each family, the quantity of potatoes planted, and the quantity (from actual inspection) now remaining on hands, with the quantity of oats or other grain now in the possession of the family. On Tuesday, we went over the property of Sir Charles Coote, adjoining Mr. Hovenden's, and also over Mr. Carter's, and, so far as time would admit, examined a few families on the property of Mrs. Kavanagh, of Gracefield. Our inquiries extended to about 190 families altogether, and enable me with the most perfect accuracy to state the frightful extent to which the destruction of the potato crop has proceeded in that part of the country. Many families whom we visited, and who had planted sufficient for their ordinary wants, including the seed necessary for the ensuing season, have not had a potato of any kind for the last month.

Observe, this is in the month of February, five months at least before there can be any supply from the natural bounty of Providence.

"Others have lost nearly all; and the few that still remain are totally unfit for human food. In every instance where we saw potatoes in pits in the fields we had them examined, and, with scarcely an exception, we found them to be a mass of putrefaction, perfectly disgusting, even to look at. We examined a few houses on the property of Sir Thomas Esmonde, where the land is of much better quality, but the result was in every case the same. There are literally no potatoes remaining in that part of the country.

"I understand the magistrates intend to meet on an early day, and make some representation, through the lieutenant of the county, on the above subject.

"W. W. Hemsworth,
"Sub-Inspector 1st Rate."

I pass on to Waterford. There are letters received within the last two days; one from the Lord Lieutenant of that county—Lord Stuart de Decies. It is dated the 10th of February; I entreat the attention of the House to it. Lord Stuart de Decies is a person whose opinions must carry with them great authority. He says—

"His Excellency will find in these statements an announcement of the alarming fact, that in two districts alone of the Union in question there are even at this early period of the year, no less than 300 persons whose stores of provisions are upon the point of becoming exhausted. In the meanwhile the rot is represented as making daily progress amongst the potatoes, which until lately it was hoped might have been preserved in a state of partial soundness for some time longer; and there is every reason, therefore, to anticipate that the distress now prevailing in certain localities will very speedily cause its pressure to be felt by the labouring classes throughout the Union. With this prospect in view, the probability is, that a rise in the price of all kinds of grain may be expected to take place in the course of the ensuing spring and summer months, although foreign supplies were to be admitted immediately duty free, and thus the facilities of providing food for the people in exchange for their labour be removed beyond the means which landed proprietors have at the present moment within their reach for this purpose. It is in these circumstances that I would venture respectfully to submit, as far as the interests of the county of Waterford are involved, that much good might be effected in keeping down prices by the establishment of Government corn stores from which grain might be purchased at first cost price in such towns as Youghal, Dungarvan, Waterford, Carrick, Clonmel, and, perhaps, Lismore. In all but the last mentioned of

these towns there is an adequate military force for the protection of such granaries, if established, and no part of the county would then be beyond twelve or fourteen miles distance from a depot, whence food on moderate terms might be drawn to those localities which stood in need of a supply."

The next I read is from Kerry, dated the 9th of February, from a gentleman whose statements I believe are entitled to the highest respect—Mr. Thomas Dillon :—

"I regret to have to report, for the information of Government, that serious ravages have been made latterly on the potatoes by the disease which, for the last two months, was supposed at least not to be progressive. Having gone round my district within the last ten days, I have had opportunities not only of hearing, but of witnessing the destruction which has been committed, and which is gaining ground rapidly, contrary to the hopes which have been for some time cherished, as to excite the utmost alarm among all classes ; and for my own part I feel almost confounded at the difficulty that must exist in procuring a sufficiency of good seed for the ensuing crop."

Such is the report of Mr. Dillon, of Cahirciveen, resident magistrate. The House is aware that there has been sitting for some time past in Dublin a Commission, one of whose duties it has been to collect accurate information with respect to the extent of the deficiency in different localities. That Commission has lately made a report, which refers, I fear, to a period antecedent to that in which this disease has reappeared. I have here an official statement, from the highest authority, embracing almost every part of Ireland, every electoral district, with the exception of ninety-nine, having sent returns; and these are the facts reported by the Commissioners :—

"That in four electoral divisions the loss of potatoes has been nearly nine-tenths of the whole crop; in 93, between seven-tenths and eight-tenths; in 125, the loss approaches to seven-tenths of the whole crop ; in 16, it approaches to six-tenths ; in 596, nearly one-half of the crop is entirely destroyed ; and in 582 divisions, nearly four-tenths of the crop are entirely destroyed."

Here are requisitions made to us, and we are acting upon them, to establish stores of corn for the people, to be retailed at cost prices, or given in remuneration for labour. [An hon. Member : It will be wanted for seed.] Yes; to get potatoes from foreign countries for the ensuing year is next to impossible. An eighth of the whole crop is required for seed; each acre of potatoes requires nearly a ton, three-fourths of a ton, at least, for seed; take the tonnage which it would require to bring in 10,000 tons of potatoes from any part of Europe where potatoes may still abound ; it is impossible to supply the deficiency by foreign import. You must look for seed from the domestic supply—by making savings from the existing crop. And here is the danger, that when the pressure of famine is severe, the immediate craving of hunger will be supplied—the necessities of next year will be forgotten ; the Government must interfere for the purpose of encouraging the saving of potatoes in sufficient quantities, in order to secure a supply of seed for next year. How are we to do this ? By the substitution, I suppose, of some other articles of provision, to be given under wise regulations, for the purpose of preventing abuse. Suppose, now, that in April or May next, we shall be under the necessity of proposing votes of public money to cover past or future expenditure—will there be a cheerful acquiescence in those votes, if the Corn Law is to remain unaltered ? We are now encouraging the resident proprietors, the clergy of the Established Church, and the clergy of the Roman Catholic persuasion, to make great exertions; we are telling them, "Individual charity in your localities must supply more than the Government can supply; you must give corn in exchange for seed potatoes, or for the sustenance of human life." Is it quite reasonable to make these demands on the private charity of those whose straitened means leave little disposable for charity, and at the same time to levy 17*s.* duty on the quarter of foreign wheat ? Is the State to show no charity ? For what is the duty to be levied ? For Revenue ? But we may have to spend public money in the purchase of corn—we may have to raise its price to the consumer by our unusual intervention. Surely it is a more becoming course to remit duty, than to buy heavily taxed corn ! Shall we levy the 17*s.* for protection to domestic corn ? What—when in 600 electoral divisions in Ireland only half the crop of potatoes has been saved, and in 600 more only three-fifths, while in some, nearly eight-tenths are gone ? Do you believe that it would be for the credit and honour of the landed aristocracy of this country to say, "We throw upon the Government the responsibility of averting the evils of famine, but not one letter of the existing Corn Law shall be altered ?" Would it be fidelity to the landed interest were I to counsel this ? No; I believe that, whatever might have been the outward show of consistency, such a proposal would be the real "treachery" which you impute to me, because I have thought it for your interest, and the interests of all, to relieve

ourselves from the odium of stipulating for these restrictions on food in such a moment of pressure. What would have been said? Why, the pressure in Holland and in Belgium is not half so severe as it will be in Ireland; and see what the Government in those two countries did at an early period of the autumn. In Belgium, the Executive Government took upon itself the responsibility of opening the ports to every description of provisions. The Government of Holland exercised the power which it had to do this by ordinance. Belgium is an agricultural country; the Chambers (the Lords and Commons of a neighbouring State) assembled; the Government asked for indemnity, and for the continuance of open ports. Without a moment's hesitation, by acclamation as it were, without one dissentient voice, the representatives of the landed interest in Belgium gave the Government indemnity, and continued the permission freely to import every article of food. What, under similar circumstances, has been the course taken by the Parliament of this country? What has been the course taken by Parliaments as deeply interested as we can be in the welfare of agriculture? There have been times before the present when there has been the apprehension of scarcity in this country; what has been the remedy? What has been the remedy that the heart of every man suggested? What has been the remedy that legislative wisdom took? Why, in every case, without exception, the removal for a time of the duties upon foreign corn. [*Cheers.*] [An hon. MEMBER: What was done at the end of the time?] I will come to that immediately. I rejoice in the cheer which I received from that quarter [looking to the Protection benches]; what is it but an assent—apparently a unanimous assent—["No!"] at any rate, a very general assent—that at a period of impending famine, the proper precaution to be taken is to encourage the free importation of food? I have a right to infer, that if that had been the proposal, namely, that existing duties upon corn and other articles of provision should be suspended for a time, that proposal would have met with general assent. Then, if that be so, I ask you to expedite the passing of this Bill: either do that, or move as an Amendment that the duties upon all articles of provision shall forthwith be suspended.

I will not omit the other consideration—the course to be taken after you have suspended the law; I am trying now to convince you that I should have been unfaithful and treacherous to the landed interest, and to the party that protect the landed interest, if I had concealed the real pressure of this Irish case, and had called forth party cheers by talking about "hoisting the flag of protection"—or "rousing the British lion"—or "adhering to the true blue colour"—or steadfast maintenance of the Corn Laws "in all their integrity." I am trying to convince you, by fair reasoning, that that is a course which would not have been consistent either with the public interest, or with the credit of the landed aristocracy. That is all I am asking you now to admit. If you answer me, "We will readily consent to suspend this law until next harvest," I am rejoiced to have that admission from three-fourths of those by whom I shall be opposed, that it would not be wise to stipulate that for the present no alteration should be made in the Corn Law, that no maize should be admitted, that no rice should be admitted, that no oats should be admitted, at a reduced rate of duty, and that the duty upon wheat should be maintained at 17*s.*; I am rejoiced that I have established, to the satisfaction of the great majority, that that would not have been a prudent or a defensible course. I say it would not, because at all periods of our history the natural precaution that has been taken has been the admission, free of duty, of foreign corn in times of scarcity. I must quote some of those instances. In 1756, there was the apprehension of famine; Parliament was assembled: the first step taken was to prohibit, unwisely, in my opinion, the exportation of corn; the second was, to permit importation duty free. In 1767, you were again threatened with scarcity: the first act of the Parliament was, to admit provisions duty free. In 1791, Parliament altered the Corn Laws—they established a new Corn Law; in 1793, there was the apprehension of scarcity; notwithstanding the new Corn Law, one of the very first Acts upon the Statute Book of 1793 is to remove, for a time, all duties upon the importation of foreign corn. In 1795, there was an apprehension, not of famine, but of scarcity, severely pressing upon some classes of the community; and in that year, and again in 1796, the same remedy was adopted—the removal of all duty upon foreign corn. In 1799, the same course was pursued, and free importation allowed. Why then, I ask, with all these precedents—when the danger, in the case of some at least, was less than it is at pre-

sent—would it have been wise for a Government to counsel that we should pursue a different course, refuse facilities for importation, and determine upon maintaining the existing law? Sir, I believe that course would have involved the Government and the Parliament in the greatest discredit; and so far from assisting us in maintaining the existing law, my firm belief is, that that law would have been encumbered with a degree of odium which would have made the defence of it impossible. It was upon these grounds that I acted. Seeing what had been done in neighbouring countries, and what had been uniformly done by your own Parliament, not when corn was at 100*s.* or 80*s.*, but in periods when it was under 60*s.*—seeing that the acknowledged remedy for scarcity was opening the ports for the admission of foreign corn, I advised the suspension of the Corn Laws. Do not answer me by saying, "There was at the period to which you refer, a different Corn Law—there was no sliding-scale — there was no admission of foreign corn at a low duty when the price was high." It was exactly the reverse of this; during the whole of that period, when corn was above 54*s.* in price, it was admitted at a duty of 6*d.*; the law made provision for the free importation of corn with even moderate prices. And why did Parliament interfere? It was in order that the high duty should not attach on a reduction of price. When corn was below 54*s.*, there was a duty of from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 24*s.* 3*d.*; when it was above 54*s.*, the duty was 6*d.*; by the natural operation of the law, therefore, corn was admitted when prices were high; but there was a fear that, from a sudden importation from neighbouring ports, corn might fall below 54*s.*, and the high duty might attach. To prevent that, and to give a guarantee to the foreign importer that he should be certain for a period of six months to have his corn admitted at a duty of 6*d.*, Parliament interposed, and gave him that guarantee. If, then, we had refused to interfere, what a contrast might have been drawn between us and those Parliaments! Would refusal have been, or would it now be, for the credit either of Parliament or of Government? I think not. We advised, therefore—at least I advised, and three of my Colleagues concurred with me—the immediate suspension of the law. The question is, what shall we do now? The law is not suspended—Parliament is sitting. It would be disrespectful towards Parliament for the Executive to take any step; it is impossible for the Executive, by an Order of Council, to do that which might have been done by an extreme exercise of authority, when Parliament was not sitting; it would not be constitutional to do it? It may be true that the best time has passed away; that the 1st of November was a better period for doing this than the present. Yes, but admitting that, the necessity for acting with decision on the 16th February is only increased. True, the supplies of foreign corn might have been more ample, had the ports been opened on the 1st November; but you have six months yet before you—and what course do you suggest? If any one dissents from that course which we propose, let him propose another. You must make your choice. You must either maintain the existing law, or make some proposal for increasing the facilities of procuring foreign articles of food.

And now I come to that second consideration from which I said I would not shrink. After the suspension of the existing law, and the admission of foreign importation for a period of several months, how do you propose to deal with the existing Corn Laws? That is the question which a Minister was bound to consider who advised the suspension of the Corn Laws. Now, my conviction is so strong that it would be utterly impossible, after establishing perfect freedom of trade in corn for a period of seven or eight months, to give a guarantee that the existing Corn Law should come into operation at the end of that period, that I could not encourage the delusive hope of such a result. I know it may be said, that after a temporary suspension of the law, the law itself would revive by its own operation, that there would be no necessity for any special enactment to restore its vigour. But I think it is an utter misapprehension of the state of public opinion to suppose it possible that after this country, for eight months, should have tasted of freedom in the trade in corn, you could revive, either by the tacit operation of the law itself, or by new and special enactment, the existing Corn Law. Surely, the fact of suspension would be a condemnation of the law. It would demonstrate that the law, which professed by the total reduction of duty on corn when it had reached a certain price to provide security against scarcity, had failed in one of its essential parts. Yet you insist on the revival of this law. Now let me ask, would you revive the existing Corn Law in all its

provisions? Would you refuse the admission of maize at lower duties?—at present the duty on maize is almost prohibitory. Do not suppose that those who advised suspension overlooked the consideration of the consequences of suspension—of the bearing it would have upon the state of the Corn Laws, and the question of future protection. At the expiration of suspension will you revive the existing law, or will you propose a new and modified Corn Law? If the existing law, every manifest defect must be preserved. By that law, the duty on maize varies inversely not with the price of maize, but with the price of barley. We want maize—the price of barley is falling, but we can get no maize, because there is a prohibitory duty on maize in consequence of the low price of barley. Oh, say some, we will have a little alteration of the law, we will provide for the case of maize. Now, do not disregard public feeling in matters of this kind. It is not right that mere feeling should overbear the deliberate conviction of reason; but depend upon it, that when questions of food are concerned, public feeling cannot safely be disregarded. In the course of last Session notice was given that maize should be imported duty free, because it was for the interest of the farmer to have maize for food for cattle. Do you think it possible to devise a new Corn Law, the leading principle of which should be that maize should come in duty free, because the admission of that article would enable the farmer to feed his cattle and pigs with it, but that there are certain other articles used for consumption by human beings—and in respect to them the law shall be maintained in all its force? Do you advise me to commit you to fight that battle? I am assuming now that the necessity for the suspension of the law has been established: that suspension having taken place, would you deliberately advise the Government, for the sake of the public interests, or for the sake of party interests, to give a pledge either that the existing Corn Law, at the expiration of that suspension should be revived unaltered—or that there should be some trumpery modification of it, for the special benefit of the feeders of pigs and cattle? Are you insensible to the real state of public opinion on this question? Are you insensible to the altered convictions of many of your own party? Could I safely rely upon your cordial and unanimous support, as a party, for the redemption of that pledge? Look to the change of opinion, not among politicians, which you are apt to attribute to some interested or corrupt motives; but look to the opinions that have been expressed—to the sincerity of which conclusive proofs have been given by some of the most honourable men that ever sat upon these benches. Did my noble Friend Lord Ashley vacate his seat for the county of Dorset from any interested or corrupt motive? Did Mr. Sturt, or Mr. W. Patten, avow their change of opinion from any interested or corrupt motives? Did Mr. Tatton Egerton offer to vacate his seat for Cheshire, or Lord Henniker his seat for Suffolk, from any other than a real change of opinion—from a conviction that the time was come for the adjustment of the question of the Corn Laws? Did Mr. Dawnay vacate his seat from such motive? Did a young Member of this House, Mr. Charteris, glowing with as high and honourable a spirit as ever animated the breast of an English gentleman—distinguished for great acuteness—great intelligence—great promise of future eminence—did he abandon his seat for Gloucestershire, and withdraw from this stirring conflict from any interested or corrupt motive? Surely these are proofs that that Minister who should suspend the law, and give a guarantee of the revival of it when the period of suspension expired, would have enormous difficulties to contend with.

But let us observe the course of the present debate, the admissions and expressions of opinion of those who have been loudest in their condemnation of the Government. The first I notice is the hon. Member for Huntingdon. Well, I confess I was surprised to hear from a gentleman of the name of Baring, some of the opinions introduced by him in regard to commerce and the Corn Laws. Would that hon. Gentleman follow me in the maintenance of the existing Corn Law after the suspension of it? So far from it, the hon. Gentleman thinks that this is just the time for a compromise on the subject. He then would abandon me, if, after the suspension, I had undertaken a guarantee to revive the existing law. He says this is just the time for a compromise. If ever there was an unfortunate moment for a compromise, it is the present. What is the meaning of a compromise? Clearly, a new Corn Law. Now, what would be the security for the permanence of that new Corn Law? [*Cheers from the Protection benches.*] You cheer; but what says every hon. Gentleman who has appeared on the part of the

agriculturists? That what the agriculturist chiefly wishes for is, permanence as to the Corn Law. Would a modified Corn Law give that assurance of permanence? Is there, in truth, any choice between maintenance of the existing Corn Law and its repeal?

I am reviewing the statements of Protectionists—of the enemies of the measures of the Government, and I am attempting to prove out of their own mouths, that it is hopeless to undertake to re-establish the present Corn Law, after its suspension. I confine myself to the stoutest advocates for protection. There is the Member for Roxburghshire: he was among the loudest in condemning the measure of the Government. The Member for Roxburghshire, by the way, has a curious notion of the relation between a country and its Minister, and between the Sovereign and the Minister of that Sovereign. The hon. Gentleman likened me to a hired advocate in a suit at law. He said I had thrown up my brief. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that a Minister takes an oath in the presence of the Sovereign to this effect, "that in all matters to be treated and debated in Council, he will, faithfully, openly, and truly, declare his mind and opinion according to his heart and conscience!" I apprehend that an obligation of this kind constitutes a material difference between the relation of a Minister to his Sovereign and a counsel to his client. The hon. Gentleman said I had been sent here to defend the old Corn Laws; that I had made a terrible breach in them in 1842; but that I was bound, at any rate, by every consideration of consistency and honour, to maintain the Corn Law of 1842. Now what reliance can I place on his support in maintaining that law? Before he closed his speech he admitted that in his own county, within the last three years, there have been such improvements in roads, such introduction of science into agriculture, such increased facilities for producing cheap corn, that in his opinion the time is come when the present Corn Laws must be altered. On hearing this, I said to the hon. Gentleman, "For whom are you counsel?" meaning that if any obligation was imposed on me to maintain the Corn Law of 1842, I could not quite understand how the hon. Gentleman could so readily abandon it. The hon. Gentleman was indignant at being supposed to be a counsel for any particular interest. "I counsel!" said he; "that is an imputation on my honour. I am counsel for the agriculturists—I am counsel for the commercial interests—I am counsel for the whole country—I am counsel for the interests of humanity." The hon. Gentleman, like Anacharsis Cloots, at the bar of the French Convention, claims to be Attorney General to the human race. Now I do not desire functions quite so comprehensive. I ask only to be counsel for all the great interests of this country, regarding them as superior to party engagements, and to have the privilege in times of great public difficulty of giving that advice which, "in my heart and conscience," I believe to be the best for the public good.

I arrive next at the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. The hon. Member informs me that hereafter, and for ever, he withdraws his confidence from me. He withdraws it upon this ground—that I have established no great principle in respect to the Corn Laws. If there ever was a man who had little reason to distrust a Minister for not establishing a principle, it is the hon. Gentleman himself. He has voted with the Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. P. Villiers), and he has voted against him. He is an advocate for a fixed duty, and he has done all he could to maintain the sliding-scale. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has shared in my misfortune, and read the pamphlets of John Colquhoun, Esquire, of Killermont. I must say that his writings, as far as I can understand them, lean to the repeal of the Corn Laws. If, then, the hon. Gentleman has voted with the Member for Wolverhampton, and has voted against him—if he is a determined supporter of a fixed duty, and yet ever since 1842 has done all in his power to maintain the sliding-scale; and if my construction of his pamphlets be correct, and that he has been an advocate of repeal, I wonder how I should have fared with him if I had laid down a great principle. I wonder what the hon. Gentleman would have said if, after having carried suspension, I should have subsequently declared that at the end of that suspension the Government would stake its existence on the revival of the existing Corn Law? I venture to say there would not have been a more strenuous opponent of such a course than the hon. Gentleman; there never, at least, was a Gentleman so clamorous for the announcement of a principle who left himself so completely at single anchor, ready to vote for or against any proposal that might be made.

I shall refer now to the opinions of a noble Lord who has not yet taken part in the present debate — the noble Lord the Member for Newark (Lord J. Manners). He has addressed a letter to his constituents on this subject. Would it be possible for the Government to rely upon that noble Lord's support, if they had taken the course I have mentioned, that of advising a renewal of the present Corn Law after its suspension? This is the noble Lord's opinion on the question of the Corn Laws:—

"The conclusion to which I have come is that sanctioned by the authority of the late Lord Spencer and other practical agriculturists, and may be stated in the emphatic words of the *Agricultural Gazette*:—'Upon the best of our unbiassed judgment, we humbly express a firm belief that both the advantages and the evils—in fact, the whole effect—of the expected change which the political journalists have bruited of late in our ears, has been absurdly magnified, as much by the ignorance as by the feelings and wishes of the combatants on both sides; and that of all the panic dreams that ever sat like a nightmare upon the energies of human enterprise, or cramped the sinews of a noble pursuit, the idea, in a densely inhabited country, where population is rapidly increasing, trade and commerce extending, industry and skill unequalled, and true science dawning, that human food is likely to become too cheap, and its production unprofitable, is the most unaccountable, and will be eventually found the most illusory and groundless."

I do not know what course the noble Lord means to take with respect to the present measure. He calls fear of the repeal of the Corn Laws a panic dream, sitting like a night-mare on the energies of human enterprize; and yet he thinks the present Parliament ought not to enact, nor the present Minister to propose, their repeal. Well, but that personal objection is no satisfactory answer to the country why this panic dream should not be disturbed.

The hon. Member for Maidstone (Mr. A. Hope) said, "I will not inquire whether the measure is right or wrong, but I will look to your conduct. I will give extracts from your speeches, and I will show that you ought not to propose a repeal of the Corn Laws." But, surely, the question which the hon. Gentleman will not ask, is the very question which the country asks, namely, is the measure right or is it wrong? Is it advisable that the Corn Laws should be suspended, and that after such suspension they should revive? If it be right, vote for such a proposal; if your objection is not to the measure, but to the Government that advises it, withdraw, if you please, your confidence from that Government; but surely you cannot justify voting against a measure which concerns such mighty interests, and which you believe to be right.

Now, Sir, I come to the Member for Somersetshire (Mr. W. Miles) who made no such admissions as those which fell from the Member for Roxburghshire, and the Member for Huntingdon. I infer from his speech, that he is for the maintenance of the existing law in all its integrity. [Mr. W. Miles: Hear, hear.] That hon. Gentleman gave me notice, that from henceforth I must not expect to possess his confidence. Of course I heard that statement with regret, though without surprise. The hon. Gentleman must excuse me for observing that, in closing his connexion with me, he has underrated his own importance. He has not always been a follower of mine. On more than one occasion he has been himself a leader. On the great question of "protection to native grease," he set up for himself, and was my determined opponent. I will rob him of none of his laurels—not one. I proposed, last year, that the then existing duty on foreign grease, an article extensively used in manufactures, should be remitted, and the hon. Gentleman rose and said, emphatically, "There must be a stop to these attacks on native produce. I take my stand on grease—

'Hence! avaunt! 'tis holy ground.'

"Grease," said the hon. Gentleman, "you shall not touch." And why? "Because," said he, "although the admission of grease might be beneficial to the manufacturers, I doubt the vigilance of the Custom-house officers, and I think some people would eat the grease, intended for manufacturers, and diminish the demand for butter." Now, I must say the hon. Gentleman, in taking his stand upon grease, did more injury to the cause of protection than has been done by any decided enemy to that cause.

Mr. W. MILES was understood to say that he had merely stopped the discussion at a late hour in order to obtain its adjournment, and was absent the next day.

Sir R. PEEL: Then I admit at once to the hon. Gentleman that on that occasion he exhibited his qualifications for a leader, by his discretion in absenting himself from the discussion on grease.

The hon. Gentleman must permit me to advert, with perfect good humour, to two or three of his arguments. I listened to his speech with great attention; but I feared that he was handling edge-tools. I had previously stated that the price of

cattle and meat had not been diminished by the Tariff; that the navy contracts for the present year had been entered into on higher terms than those of preceding years. The hon. Gentleman said I had omitted to state the real cause of this increase—that I had overlooked the fact that, during the last six months, the number of sheep brought into Smithfield market had decreased by 250,000, as compared with a former period of six months; that there had been an average weekly falling-off in the London market of 16,000 sheep; that the cattle had decreased in weight from ten to seven stone, and, therefore, meat was higher in price. Be it so. Now, does the hon. Gentleman, after making such a statement, really exult in having opposed the Tariff of 1842? Does he think it a public misfortune that when our own cattle have been half-starved for want of green food—when the supply of sheep in Smithfield market has fallen off, according to his own showing, to the extent of 250,000 in one half year—when there is a deficiency of 16,000 in the weekly supply of sheep—when "the kine are lean-fleshed and ill-favoured," does he think it a public misfortune that we have imported in twelve months a few healthy cattle, and some sheep from the Continent to the extent of a week's deficiency?

Mr. W. MILES said, he had suggested that the duty on cattle should be regulated by weight, and not by numbers.

Sir R. PEEL continued: I now refer to the hon. Member's remarks relative to the article of flax. When a duty of 10*l.* a ton was imposed upon foreign flax, it seems that certain parishes in the county of Somerset grew flax. In the parish of Chisselburgh 100 acres were devoted to the culture of that article, but now grow flax no longer. Now, I should wish to know what were the circumstances under which that cultivation was abandoned? Was it in consequence of the withdrawal of the duty? and at what period did Chisselburgh abandon the cultivation of flax?

Mr. W. MILES: After the last removal of the duty on flax.

Sir R. PEEL: The last removal! why the last removal of duty was in 1842. And what was the amount of that duty? It was one penny on the hundred weight of foreign flax. Surely, that was no protection to the domestic produce of Chisselburgh and Aldcock, and the two Cockers. If these parishes have very recently ceased to cultivate flax, it has been for some better reason than the removal of the duty on foreign flax. That removal took place, not in 1842, but in 1824. Previously to 1824, there was a duty on foreign flax of 10*l.* per ton; and it was then reduced to a nominal duty — recently repealed altogether. "See," says the hon. Gentleman, "what injury free trade has inflicted on Chisselburgh! 1,000*l.* have been annually withdrawn from the encouragement of native industry in one parish alone!" It is pretty clear that free trade has had nothing to do with the matter. But if it had, are there no interests in the world but those of the parish of Chisselburgh, and the two Cockers? Would the loss of 1,000*l.* in Chisselburgh, be decisive against the free admission of foreign flax? Let us see what has taken place in other important parts of the Empire, since the withdrawal of the protection to native industry. You will find that in Ireland no culture is at this moment more profitable than that of flax; you will find that this trade has become flourishing since the last remnant of protection was withdrawn. It appears from the Report of Lord Devon's Commission, that the culture of flax in Ireland is more profitable than that of wheat; that flax, without protection, gives a better return than wheat with it. And what has been the effect upon the manufacture of linen? What was the state of the linen manufacture in Ireland before the removal of protection? I will assume, for the calculation, that a fixed amount of French cambrics and cambric handkerchiefs — say 1,000 dozens— has been imported into London annually. Before the removal of the duty, the manufacture of Irish, as compared with French cambrics, was as 100 to 1,000 dozens. In the next four years, from 1830 to 1834, the Irish manufacture was in the proportion of 300 to 1,000 dozens; from 1834 to 1838, as 900 to 1,000; from 1838 to 1842, as 4,000 to 1,000; and from 1844 to 1846, as 16,000 to 1,000. Since the withdrawal of protection, a great manufacture has arisen in the north of Ireland. I was assured the other day, by dealers in linen of the highest respectability, that whereas ten years ago, three-fourths of the cambrics and cambric handkerchiefs came from France, and one-fourth only from Ireland, in the last year the proportion was just reversed; one-fourth coming from France, and three-fourths from Ireland. So that it may be true that Chisselburgh has suffered; but coincident with that suffering, the culture of flax in Ireland, and the linen manu-

facture of Ireland, have prospered to an extent exceeding the expectations of the most sanguine friend to Ireland. Well now, in order to restore prosperity to the parish of Chisselburgh, will you replace the 10*l.* duty on foreign flax? And will you do this under the pretence of protecting native industry?

This debate, Sir, has chiefly turned on the Corn Laws—but it is not necessarily a Corn Law debate. I propose a Committee of the whole House to consider the principles of our commercial policy. No doubt the question of the Corn Laws will come before that Committee; but it is quite open to you to reject my proposal on the subject of the Corn Laws, and to agree to all or some of the others. So much, however, has been said on the subject of the Corn Laws, in the course of this debate, that I cannot avoid adverting to it. Sir, Her Majesty's Ministers have proposed this measure in the belief that it is the one most likely to ensure success. They have proposed that, at the end of three years, the duties on corn shall be repealed, or at least reduced to a nominal amount. I proposed that measure, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, in the sincere belief that it was likely to be more acceptable than immediate repeal to the agricultural interest. I proposed it in the belief that not merely would it be more acceptable to them, but that it would be more advantageous than immediate repeal. We accompanied our proposal with respect to the Corn Laws, with another for encouraging the improvement of land, by advancing public money for the purpose of drainage. I certainly thought that, as to many lands in this country, we should be in a better position to compete with the foreigner, if absolute repeal of the Corn Laws were postponed to the end of three years; that there would be a better opportunity for making arrangements, if necessary, between landlord and tenant; that, considering that Canada has now an advantage as to the admission of her corn, compared with the corn of foreigners, it would be more acceptable to Canada, and more for the interest of that Colony, that some time should elapse before Canada corn came into direct competition with that of the United States. It was on this account, believing that the arrangement we proposed was more likely to prevent panic, and on the whole better for the agriculturists, that on the part of the Government I made the proposal. Believing it to be the best, it is my intention to adhere to it—that is to say, I shall propose it, and use all the legitimate means I can to give effect to it. But, Sir, it was intimated the other night by the Member for Somersetshire, speaking on the part of the agriculturists, that he would greatly prefer immediate repeal to the proposal of the Government; and that sentiment of his, as he turned round to his friends behind him, received apparently a very general concurrence. Now, as I stated before, it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to adhere to their proposal. But at the same time I feel it to be my duty distinctly to give notice that if the agricultural body are of opinion that it will be for their advantage that there should be immediate instead of deferred repeal—if, by an union with hon. Gentlemen opposite, they should place me in a minority, then the only consideration which I shall bear in mind will be this—What course can I take best calculated to give effect to the law so amended at your instance? I will do all I can to carry the proposition of the Government. I prefer it—I proposed it believing it to be favourable to the agricultural interest. I do not say what course, speaking for myself, individually, I may pursue. I don't say what effect the substitution of immediate for postponed repeal here might have in another place, for which I have less means of answering than I have had heretofore; but this I will say, that my own opinion as to the policy of a final adjustment of the Corn Laws will remain unaltered; and that I shall decidedly prefer immediate repeal, even though carried against my own proposal, to throwing the country into confusion by the rejection of this measure. Observe, it will be quite open for me to consider what course of personal conduct will be most conducive to the result I should have in view; but the final adjustment of this question will be with me a consideration paramount to all others.

In the course of this debate, I have been asked more than once to specify the price at which corn will sell after the passing of the new law. I observed, that it was very difficult for me to give a positive answer to that question; that I thought the price must be affected by variation of seasons and other considerations; and I, therefore, could not offer—nor, indeed, would past experience encourage me to offer—any guarantee, or to give any positive opinion, as to the probable future price

of corn. But this I must say, that nothing can be more erroneous than to suppose that the interests of agriculture are necessarily interwoven with the price of wheat. I will attempt to demonstrate this. The Member for Somersetshire talked of the boundless wilds from which corn would come, and is oppressed with the fear of enormous production. I will ask him to consider that the island of Jersey has, for many years, enjoyed free trade in corn, and to look at the result as to price in that island. Corn may be introduced into Malta from Egypt and Odessa. The price of it delivered at Malta has been, on an average of years, about 30*s.* per quarter; but that corn bears a price of 10*s.* less in the English markets, on account of its decided inferiority. It is impossible to draw a just inference from the nominal price at which corn may sell, without, at the same time taking into account, among other elements of price, the quality of the corn. I doubt, certainly, whether there will be any such great reduction in the price of wheat, in consequence of more extended importation, as seriously to injure the agricultural interest. But what I want to show is this—that agricultural prosperity has no necessary connexion with a high price of wheat. It has been frequently admitted that there never was a time when science was so successfully applied to agriculture, when such reductions had been made in the cost of production, as in the last three or four years. Yet the price of wheat has been declining. The price of wheat seems to have a necessary tendency to decline in this country, apart altogether from all legislation. I will take decennial periods, commencing with the ten years ending in 1805. The average price of wheat for the ten years ending

	s.	d.
1805 was	81	10½
1815 „	97	6
1825 „	78	8
1835 „	56	7
1845 „	57	11

Now, what has been the average of the last four years—a period during which the greatest improvements are admitted to have been made in the science of agriculture? The average of the last four years has been 51*s.* 10*d.* only. The average of fifty years, from 1791 to 1841, was 68*s.* 7*d.* The price of wheat has fallen, between 1815 and 1845, taking the average of four or five preceding years, from 97*s.* 6*d.* to 51*s.* 10*d.* And yet it is admitted that agricultural prosperity was never more marked, and that at no period were greater improvements made. And, therefore, if there should be still a continued fall in the price of wheat, I must ask you, in the first place, not to impute it, as a necessary consequence, to the operation of the new law, for I have shown you that there is a natural tendency to a decline in the price of wheat; and in the second place, not to consider a diminished price of wheat indicative of the ruin of agriculture. A remarkable series of facts presents itself in comparing the rental of land with the price of wheat. The gross rental of land in 1815, as taken from the Property Tax Return, was 32,502,000*l.* The average price of wheat for the five years ending in 1815 was 102*s.* 5*d.* For the five years ending with 1842, the price of wheat was 64*s.* 7*d.*, while the gross rental of land in England had increased to 37,794,000*l.* Thus, coincident with a fall in the price of corn, there was an increase in the rental of land. I admit that there was a change in the currency as comparing 1815 with 1842, but then you must recollect, if on that account you take 10 per cent. off the nominal price of corn, in the one case, you must take 10 per cent. off the gross rental also; so that the result, as far as the argument is concerned, is the same. If you deduct 10 per cent. from the price of the first five years, on account of depreciated currency, the price will be 92*s.* 2*d.*; but you must also deduct 10 per cent. from the gross rental of the first five years, which will reduce it to 29,250,000*l.* Take it as you will, there has been increased rental coincident with an immense reduction in the price of wheat. No doubt the productive powers of the land have been increased—no doubt great improvements have been made—but surely this is a proof that with declining prices of wheat there has been a profitable application of capital to the improvement of the soil.

Sir, a speech was made during this debate of great ability—I allude to that of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. Stafford O'Brien). However I may regret some of the expressions in that speech, or dissent from its conclusions, I cannot do otherwise than acknowledge its ability. But what was the argument of the hon. Gentleman? He told us that, after this law was passed, the tenant-farmer would come to his landlord, and would address him somewhat after this manner—"I cannot afford to pay the

rent I have hitherto paid. The bones of my family have been deposited for many generations in the churchyard of this ancient parish. It is most painful to me to quit this, the residence of my ancestors, the rude forefathers of this hamlet, and to seek my fortune in another country." And the hon. Gentleman (making a great impression on this House, from the pathetic tone in which his speech was delivered) proposed that the landlord should make a speech in reply. Addressing the tenant, he was to say—"My good fellow!"—[*Laughter*]—"My good fellow! it is true that your forefathers lived in this parish, and that there has been an intimate relation between your ancestors and mine; but the principles of free trade are prevailing now. I can purchase all the articles of my consumption at a cheaper rate in foreign markets. I must deal with you on the same principle. The land you occupy produces only three quarters of wheat per acre. With the application of capital and skill, it may be made to produce five quarters; and there is a gentleman connected with the Anti-Corn-Law League"—[Mr. S. O'Brien: No, no!] Well, then, "a gentleman connected with the manufacturing districts (not the Anti-Corn-Law League), is ready to come and take your farm at an increased rent." This was the speech which the hon. Gentleman put into the mouth of his landlord. Now, Sir, I can suggest another, and I think a better, speech to be made by this landlord to his desponding tenant. I would have him say, "My good fellow!"—[*Laughter.*] (Let us have for each speech the same advantage of the pathetic tone.) "My good fellow! our forefathers have, it is true, been buried in the churchyard of this parish. The fortunes of your family have long been connected with the fortunes of mine. This protection to agriculture has been a bad business for both of us. Under these protective laws your farm, which ought to produce five quarters of wheat per acre, only produces three; and public opinion will hardly tolerate this, that there shall be at the same time restrictions on the import of foreign corn, and that our own soil shall produce two-fifths less than it ought to produce. We must take some measures, therefore, to increase the produce of your farm. I have the advantage of the new Tariff, I am able to purchase my luxuries and comforts at a lower rate, and I intend to apply the whole amount of the saving to your assistance, and to the improvement of your land. I won't, therefore, turn you out of your farm; I won't let this manufacturer outbid you in the rent; but, my good fellow, it is for your interest and mine that the land should bear five quarters of wheat instead of three. You have not the capital and science which are necessary for this; I will assist you by the advance of capital, by scientific advice in improving your land; I will contribute towards the education of your son, and enable him to assist you in your old age, and to succeed you in the farm hereafter. I will cut down the trees which encumber your fields. Let you and I unite to keep out this foreign invader — this manufacturer who wants to supplant you. You have the industry, I have the capital; let us improve this farm; let it be handed down to your son and to mine in an improved state; there shall be five quarters of wheat where there are three now. That will be for the benefit of both landlord and tenant; and the bones of your sons, and the bones of mine for generations to come shall lie together in the old churchyard with those of our forefathers." Now that is the speech which I would put into the mouth of the landlord, and I think it the better speech of the two. Well, but suppose the tenant should rejoin, "Ah, Sir, this is not a landlord's—this is not a tenant's—this is a labourer's question." I should answer, "Then, my good fellow, if we make this land which now produces three quarters of wheat produce five, we shall employ more labourers. There will be a greater demand for labour. Thus all parties will be benefited—the estate will be benefited, the security for your rent will be increased—your comfort will be increased—there will be more labour employed—and all this good will be done by the liberal application of that saving which the hon. Gentleman says the rich are to derive from free trade and the new Tariff."

This, however, is no mere Corn Law question. Her Majesty made surely no unreasonable demand when She thus addressed you in the Speech from the Throne:

> "I recommend you to take into your early consideration whether the principles on which you have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in your power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufactures of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which I have adverted."

And you promised you would do this. The

Address was purposely worded not to give a pledge as to the adoption of particular measures; but it gave this assurance to the Sovereign, that—

"In compliance with Her Majesty's recommendation we will take into our early consideration whether the principles on which we have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in our power, after a careful review of the existing duties npon many articles, the produce or manufactures of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which Her Majesty has adverted."

How do you fulfil that assurance? Will you refuse to go into Committee at all? What is the Amendment? Does it embody any great principle, as I expected it would, from the early notice that was given by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme? I expected he would have moved either that the Government was not entitled to the confidence of Parliament, or that native industry is entitled to protection; but what Motion is made now? Why, that no reduction of Customs' Duties shall be considered for six months to come. After a positive assurance given to Her Majesty that you will take these matters into consideration, you determine not only that there shall be no change, but no inquiry—no consideration. Is it possible you can refuse to go into the Committee? Do you decide at once against the admission of foreign brandy, for instance? Do you decide at once against the admission of foreign silk? This Amendment absolutely precludes the consideration in Committee of any one of these questions. In point of fact, this is not a question of corn at all. There is a great principle at issue; the question is with respect to commercial policy. The question is, will you advance or will you recede? The immediate proposal is, indeed, to stand still—for six months to come to do nothing! With reference to the commercial policy of this great country, to stand still is to retrograde. The carrying of this Amendment is a reflection on the past course of the House of Commons. Every year you have been relaxing protection; you say you will relax it no more—you will not listen to any proposals—the Speaker shall not leave the Chair. Well, I do hope this House, which has been party to all the former proposals of reduction, which simplified the commercial code, which consented to the Tariff of 1842, which passed the Canada Corn Bill, which passed the amended Tariff of 1845—I do hope this House will not pass such a reflection on itself as to vote that the consideration of these measures be postponed for six months to come.

The question at issue is, whether you will advance in the relaxation of duties and the removal of prohibitions, or restore prohibitory duties, and increase protective duties. I never said that it was on the experience of the Tariff for the last three years, that the measures of the Government were founded. I said this—that during three years there have been, coincident with abundance and low prices of food, great contentment—the diminution of crime—the abatement of all social disorders, improved health — increased commerce. This is the experience of three years to which I referred—which tends to prove that cheapness and plenty are the foundation of your prosperity. I did not take the credit of this to the Tariff: all I claimed for the Tariff was this—that, concurrently with these great blessings, there have been constant relaxations of duties protective and prohibitory; and that if they have not caused—they have not, at any rate, obstructed our advance in the course of improvement. But I will offer this challenge, not connected with the Tariff of the last three years alone, but with respect to the whole series of your relaxations of prohibitory duties; show me, in the case of any important protected interest, one relaxation, one removal of prohibition, which has not contributed to the advantage of the great body of the consumers of this country. Nay, I go further. Again, speaking of all great interests, show me any removal of prohibition, or extreme protection, which has not, at an early period, contributed to the welfare of the producer.

I have been ashamed to read some of the petitions which have been presented on this subject of protection. A petition was presented the other night from certain shipowners of the port of London. The petitioners represent that they are deeply interested in the prosperity of the shipping interest; and, in conclusion, they —"invoke the wisdom of Parliament to check all further rash experiments on British navigation, and, as an earnest of its sympathy with a branch of commerce indissolubly connected with national defence, they implore your Honourable House to reject the proposition for reducing the duty on the importation of foreign timber from 25*s.* to 15*s.*, as proposed by Her Majesty's Government."

And this from shipowners! From the builders of ships! And they conclude with a prayer to you to check all further rash

experiments on British navigation! What has been the issue of the rash experiment you made in 1842? You found, then, a discriminating duty of 45*s.* in favour of Canada timber, which you reduced to 25*s.* Have you destroyed the Canada trade? Has that rash experiment been destructive of the welfare of shipowners? You reduced the duty on Canada timber to nothing; on Baltic timber you reduced the duty from 45*s.* to 25*s.* the load. What has been the result? At the port of Liverpool the average tonnage in the British North American trade for eleven years preceding the reduction of duty was 153,000 tons; since you removed the duty, since you made the rash experiments of 1842, the average tonnage has been 194,000 tons. On the average of seven years before the reduction of duty 5,749,000 cubic feet of pine, of all sorts, were brought into home consumption; in 1844, the quantity amounted to 6,211,000 cubic feet; and in 1845 to 6,807,000 cubic feet. Yet the shipowners call on you to refuse a reduction of the duty on Baltic timber to 15*s.* the load, as they called on you to refuse a reduction formerly from 45*s.* to 25*s.* I presume Liverpool is interested in the prosperity of the Canada trade, and in the building of ships. Allow me to read the following extract from a Liverpool circular with reference to the supply of timber for building ships of the first class:—

"There is one branch of the timber trade which has this year been very scantily supplied with those woods adapted for the construction of ships of the first class. So trifling has been the supply, that at the present moment this, one of the greatest maritime ports in the world, is in the anomalous position of not having in stock a single log of foreign wood suitable for a twelve years' ship. There can be no question, therefore, of the policy which, by removal of duties, would encourage the supply of such woods from all parts of the world, and, at all events, admit, free of duty, all oaks, hard-woods, masts, spars, treenails, pitch, pine, and such woods as enter largely and almost exclusively into the construction of ships. As the Colonial timber trade, formerly encouraged by bounty, has at length arrived at its present enlarged state, it is surely not unreasonable now that the shipwright should have all restrictions removed, so as to receive from all parts of the world, at least in the unsawn state, whatever material he employs in the construction of ships, the great source of this country's wealth and power, and absolutely necessary for her national defence. The removal of all restrictions, and an economical mode of storing, would cause this to be one of the largest depots in the kingdom."

Not a single log of foreign wood in the port of Liverpool suitable for a twelve years' ship! Can this be true? and if it is, what think you of a petition from shipowners and shipbuilders to reject the rash experiment of permitting a freer access to the timber required for shipbuilding? and will that free access destroy the Canada trade? On the contrary, as the import of foreign wool increased the demand for domestic wool, so will the import of Baltic timber increase the demand for that sort of Canada timber for which the former is not a substitute.

I cannot pass unnoticed the speech of my gallant Friend the Member for Liverpool (Sir Howard Douglas). It was a condemnation of the principles of free trade, and an argument that such principles are wholly at variance with the maintenance of our revenue, and our colonial system. My gallant Friend assumes that free trade means the removal of duties levied on articles of consumption for revenue purposes. I make no such proposition, and defend no such doctrine. Nay, I do not advise, even with reference to purely commercial considerations, the sudden and violent application of principles theoretically true. I do not abolish all protective duties; on the contrary, the amended Tariff maintains many duties that are purely protective, as distinguished from revenue duties. But though duties levied for revenue may operate as protection to branches of domestic industry, there is a clear distinction between the objects for which such duties, and duties purely protective, are levied; and it is a wholly erroneous assumption, that those who advise that the principles of free trade should be the ruling principles to which our commercial policy should gradually conform, either do contend, or are bound by any logical necessity to contend, that *bonâ fide* revenue duties on foreign products ought to be abolished. Then as to the colonial system. Any one who heard my gallant Friend's speech would infer, that the measures of the Government involve a total subversion of that system. If they pass, there will still be left discriminating duties considerable in amount in favour of almost all articles the produce of the Colonies — sugar, coffee, timber, butter, cheese, and various articles of colonial manufacture. But this I cannot deny, that for many years past you have applied to your colonial system the same general principle you have applied to your commercial policy, foreign and domestic. Your rule has been (a wise rule, I think,) to relax cautiously and gradually the rigour of the colonial sys-

tem. All the measures of Mr. Huskisson had that tendency. The relaxation was not a one-sided one, favouring the mother country at the expense of the Colonies. You have reduced the discriminating duties on coffee, to a limited extent on sugar, and on other articles of colonial produce; but you have consented, at the same time, to forego the protection which the produce of the mother country had in the colonial market. You have permitted the Colonies to supply themselves from the United States with articles of the first necessity; you have reduced the protecting duties in favour of British, as compared with articles of foreign manufacture, from 30 to 20, to 15, to 7½ per cent. The ruling spirit which has prevailed for a long series of years in your colonial legislation has been the relaxation of protection—the reciprocal relaxation of it as regards British and Colonial produce. And has either party been injured by it? It is a mistake to suppose that our colonial system, and the attachment of the Colonies to the mother country, are based upon a system of exclusion and prohibition. Some of your Colonies—the Australian Colonies, for instance—derive little benefit from the colonial system, if that system implies exclusive favour to colonial produce. But, surely, speaking generally, your colonial relations are perfectly compatible with the just and cautious application of a liberal policy in the commercial intercourse between the mother country and its dependencies.

Now, as to the protection to native industry. The advocates of the Corn Law seek to enlist in the defence of that law all branches of manufactures threatened with the loss or diminution of protection. The warmest sympathy is expressed with the working classes employed in manufactures which are to be ruined by foreign competition.

The hon. Gentleman the Member for Nottingham was particularly severe upon the removal of protective duties on paper-hangings. I really don't know why there should be such a complaint. There is an Excise duty of ¼*d.* per square yard on papers fabricated in this country; and I propose that there shall be a duty on foreign paper about 700 per cent. above the domestic duty. I propose, that while British pays ¼*d.*, foreign should pay 2*d.* per yard. I know it is said our patterns are inferior to the foreign. But, depend upon it, there is nothing in the physical constitution of Englishmen to prevent them from drawing as good patterns as Frenchmen, if you will stimulate them to exertion by competition. The hon. Gentleman described himself looking out of his window, and mourning over the sight of a vast number of paper-makers, carriage-makers, and others, all crying out that they are ruined by free trade. Why, there has not been a single alteration made in prohibitory or protective duties where the same prophecy has not been made. It was the constant warning when the Tariff was altered in 1842. We proposed to admit foreign potatoes at a moderate rate of duty. The potato growers of Yorkshire said, "We shall be ruined." In 1842, there was a reduction of the duty on hops from 8*l.* 11*s.* to 4*l.* 10*s.* The hop-growers of Kent and Sussex said, "We shall be ruined: where are those employed in the culture of hops to find subsistence?" What quantity of foreign hops have come in at the reduced duty? Two hundred weight. I have now proposed that there shall be a reduction of the duty to 2*l.* 5*s.* A deputation of hop-growers were with me the other day, and said they would be ruined. I referred to the prophecy they had made in 1842, and showed them that the whole quantity introduced was no more than those two hundred weight. When Mr. Huskisson proposed an alteration of the Silk Duties, about twenty years since, how gloomy were the forebodings of ruin! That great authority, Mr. Baring (Lord Ashburton) resisted the reduction of protection, and said—

> "There were hundreds of thousands of poor honest men who knew nothing in the world of political economy, but who, because some very wise men had sprung up of late, were to be robbed of the earnings of their patient labours. There was to be only a duty of 30 per cent. protection against foreign competition. Would the House consent to a measure which must have the effect of driving all the workmen connected with it to the poor rates for subsistence? When the French manufacturer maintained—as he (Mr. Baring) contended he would—his superiority, what would become of his (Mr. Huskisson's) principles then? How was he to reconcile himself to the operation of a system which would drive to utter ruin and starvation the hundreds of thousands engaged in the silk trade throughout the United Kingdom?"

One Gentleman improved upon Mr. Baring's denunciation, and said, "As for unbending, hard-hearted metaphysicians"—(his language reminds me of some attacks which have been made of late upon another Minister)—"they exceeded the devil himself in point of malignity and contempt for the happiness of mankind." Mr. Huskisson

replied in these memorable and affecting terms :—

"I have been assailed and distressed by ungenerous appeals to my feelings calling upon me to commune with my conscience and my God, and to say whether I am under no visitations of compunction and remorse. Good God! that man must have a heart of stone who can witness without sympathy and pain the distress which now exists among our manufacturers. I hope I am not wanting in the duties and feelings of a man. I have also a duty to perform as a Minister—to trace the causes of the present calamities, and to prevent, if possible, their recurrence."

He therefore persevered: he removed the duty; and what has been the result? Were hundreds of thousands of silk manufacturers thrown out of employment? Have the poor rates been burdened for their subsistence? Have we been unable to compete with foreigners? In the decennial period ending in 1823, the quantity of raw and thrown silk entered for home consumption was . . 19,409,023 lbs.

For the ten years ending 1833, immediately after the reduction of the duty	39,681,248	,,
For the ten years ending 1843 . . .	52,007,118	,,

The aggregate annual consumption of the successive decennial periods was

For the ten years ending 1823 . . .	1,940,000	,,
For the ten years ending 1833 . . .	3,968,124	,,
For the ten years ending 1843 . . .	5,200,711	,,

A further reduction of duty took place in 1842. The consumption, which for the ten years ending in 1823 was on the annual average . . . . 1,940,902 ,,

For the single year 1844 6,208,021 ,,

Who was the true philanthropist? Was it the man who cried out against the admission of French silks, and denounced the Minister as being equal to the devil himself in point of malignity and contempt for the happiness of mankind? Or, was it that Minister who said "Good God! don't suppose I do not sympathize with distress. Don't load me with the reproach of causing ruin to thousands when I am endeavouring to benefit them? I have seen Spitalfields under the system of protection at the point of starvation. I have seen constantly recurring periods of severe distress; let me trace the causes of such calamities, and try whether by bringing in the free air of competition, I cannot diminish or remove the sources of such calamities." And have you been unable to compete with France? Why, you have sent silk manufactures, goods and yarn, into that very country which has Lyons at the head of the silk trade; you sent as great an amount of silk manufactures into France last year as you exported to all Europe in the year 1826. I could go through the details of other articles. I could go through timber, through wool, through flax, through inferior articles; but let me take only one, the article of foreign feathers. It seems a small article, but trade consists of an aggregate of small articles. In the year 1842 we reduced the duty on foreign feathers; at that time a manufacturer of those articles in which feathers are used, said that this was the most hard-hearted measure that was ever introduced; that he had a house in England, and another in Ireland — that he dealt with English farmers for feathers, and found them careless with respect to them—that the Irish were more provident, though not very humane, as they plucked the birds alive. But he said he took almost all his feathers from Ireland, and he brought thence every year 100 tons of feathers, and that he paid for them 20*s.* a stone. There would be an end of the feather trade, he said, with the Irish and English farmer if this measure should be passed. Well, it did pass, and this year the same person, admits his error in having opposed the reduction of duty on foreign feathers. I have very recently received this statement, founded, I believe, on his own assurances :—

"He has imported in one year '1845' from St. Petersburgh above 250 tons of feathers, and over 50 tons more from other places, Dantzic, Riga, Memel, and the Mediterranean; and, strange to say, so great has the demand become for feather beds, since they became cheap, that he purchased 150 tons also, in 1845, in Ireland, the growth of Ireland; and he is paying now 22s. 10d. per stone, showing an increased growth of 50 tons, and of price for the same article, while the great demand has enabled him to extend his concern and lessen his charges. He added that when provisions were cheap in Cornwall, the miners purchased a great deal of feathers."

This is a small matter, but it reads us an important lesson. The cheapness of the article has multiplied the demand for it; with increased foreign import, there has been an increased demand for the domestic produce. The Cornish miners,

earning high wages and buying at a low price the articles of food, apply their savings to the purchase of manufactured articles, and of that particular article which enables them to recruit by night the severe toil of the day.

This night is to decide between the policy of continued relaxation of restriction, or the return to restraint and prohibition. This night you will select the motto which is to indicate the commercial policy of England. Shall it be "advance" or "recede?" Which is the fitter motto for this great Empire? Survey our position, consider the advantage which God and nature have given us, and the destiny for which we are intended We stand on the confines of Western Europe, the chief connecting link between the old world and the new. The discoveries of science, the improvement of navigation, have brought us within ten days of St. Petersburgh, and will soon bring us within ten days of New York. We have an extent of coast greater in proportion to our population and the area of our land than any other great nation, securing to us maritime strength and superiority. Iron and coal, the sinews of manufacture, give us advantages over every rival in the great competition of industry. Our capital far exceeds that which they can command. In ingenuity—in skill—in energy—we are inferior to none. Our national character, the free institutions under which we live, the liberty of thought and action, an unshackled press, spreading the knowledge of every discovery and of every advance in science—combine with our natural and physical advantages to place us at the head of those nations which profit by the free interchange of their products. And is this the country to shrink from competition? Is this the country to adopt a retrograde policy? Is this the country which can only flourish in the sickly artificial atmosphere of prohibition? Is this the country to stand shivering on the brink of exposure to the healthful breezes of competition?

Choose your motto. "Advance" or "Recede." Many countries are watching with anxiety the selection you may make. Determine for "Advance," and it will be the watchword which will animate and encourage in every state the friends of liberal commercial policy. Sardinia has taken the lead. Naples is relaxing her protective duties and favouring British produce. Prussia is shaken in her adherence to restriction. The Government of France will be strengthened; and, backed by the intelligence of the reflecting, and by conviction of the real welfare of the great body of the community, will perhaps ultimately prevail over the self-interest of the commercial and manufacturing aristocracy which now predominates in her Chambers. Can you doubt that the United States will soon relax her hostile Tariff, and that the friends of a freer commercial intercourse — the friends of peace between the two countries—will hail with satisfaction the example of England?

This night, then—if on this night the debate shall close—you will have to decide what are the principles by which your commercial policy is to be regulated. Most earnestly, from a deep conviction, founded not upon the limited experience of three years alone, but upon the experience of the results of every relaxation of restriction and prohibition, I counsel you to set the example of liberality to other countries. Act thus, and it will be in perfect consistency with the course you have hitherto taken. Act thus, and you will provide an additional guarantee for the continued contentment, and happiness, and well-being of the great body of the people. Act thus, and you will have done whatever human sagacity can do for the promotion of commercial prosperity.

You may fail. Your precautions may be unavailing. They may give no certain assurance that mercantile and manufacturing prosperity will continue without interruption. It seems to be incident to great prosperity that there shall be a reverse—that the time of depression shall follow the season of excitement and success. That time of depression must perhaps return; and its return may be coincident with scarcity caused by unfavourable seasons. Gloomy winters, like those of 1841 and 1842, may again set in. Are those winters effaced from your memory? From mine they never can be. Surely you cannot have forgotten with what earnestness and sincerity you re-echoed the deep feelings of a gracious Queen, when at the opening and at the close of each Session, She expressed the warmest sympathy with the sufferings of Her people, and the warmest admiration of their heroic fortitude.

These sad times may recur. "The years of plenteousness may have ended," and "the years of dearth may have come;" and again you may have to offer the unavailing expressions of sympathy, and the urgent exhortations to patient resignation.

Commune with your own hearts and answer me this question: will your assurances of sympathy be less consolatory—will your exhortations to patience be less impressive—if, with your willing consent, the Corn Laws shall have then ceased to exist? Will it be no satisfaction to you to reflect, that by your own act, you have been relieved from the grievous responsibility of regulating the supply of food? Will you not then cherish with delight the reflection that, in this the present hour of comparative prosperity, yielding to no clamour, impelled by no fear—except, indeed, that provident fear, which is the mother of safety—you had anticipated the evil day, and, long before its advent, had trampled on every impediment to the free circulation of the Creator's bounty?

When you are again exhorting a suffering people to fortitude under their privations, when you are telling them, "These are the chastenings of an all-wise and merciful Providence, sent for some inscrutable but just and beneficent purpose—it may be, to humble our pride, or to punish our unfaithfulness, or to impress us with the sense of our own nothingness and dependence on His mercy;" when you are thus addressing your suffering fellow subjects, and encouraging them to bear without repining the dispensations of Providence, may God grant that by your decision of this night you may have laid in store for yourselves the consolation of reflecting that such calamities are, in truth, the dispensations of Providence—that they have not been caused, they have not been aggravated by laws of man restricting, in the hour of scarcity, the supply of food!

Debate again adjourned.

House adjourned at a quarter to two o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, February 17, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS. — 1ª. Citations (Scotland); Fishery Piers and Harbours (Ireland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED. From Inhabitants of the Parish of Newton St. Cyres, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.—From Rev. W. A. Morgan, Perpetual Curate of the Parish of Tresmere, near Launceston, complaining of the Conduct of the Churchwardens, who refuse to make a Church Rate, and for Relief.—From Magistrates, Burgesses, and others, of the Royal Burgh of Irvine, in favour, and from Tenant Farmers, and others, of Thirsk, against the Principles of Free Trade.—From Inhabitants of the Township of Osgoodby, and several other places, for Protection to the Agricultural Interest.—From the Presbytery of Ellon, in favour of the Turnpike Roads (Scotland) Bill.

BURDENS ON LAND.

LORD BEAUMONT nominated the following Peers as Members of the Select Committee appointed on the previous evening to inquire into the Burdens on Real Property, and the impediments on agriculture caused thereby, as well as by the present system of Excise, Poor Laws, and Poor Taxation:—Lord President; Lord Privy Seal; Dukes Richmond, and Buckingham and Chandos; Marquesses Lansdowne, and Salisbury; Earls Hardwicke, Radnor, Clarendon, Malmesbury, Grey, Stradbroke, Lovelace, and Ellenborough; Lords Dacre, Beaumont, Redesdale, Dalhousie, Colchester, Brougham and Vaux, Stanley, Ashburton, Cottenham, and Monteagle of Brandon.

LORD BROUGHAM was obliged to his noble Friend for his kindness in placing his name upon the Committee. He had no objection to the inquiry, though he had no very sanguine hope of its leading to any very practical result. The subject was one rather of discussion in their Lordships' House than of inquiry by a Committee.

The LORD CHANCELLOR: Perhaps my noble and learned Friend may be able to persuade the Committee at once that they can arrive at no practical determination?

The DUKE of RICHMOND thought that the points which would come before the Committee were very simple; the statement which had been put forward was, that land was taxed to a greater extent than any other property. He apprehended, to decide that matter, it was only necessary to call upon a farmer to produce his books in order to show what was the amount of taxes to which he was subject; and then to call upon a manufacturer and upon a tradesman to do the same, and the fact, one way or the other, would be seen at once without any discussion. Until now he had never heard that there was any difference of opinion upon the subject. Which was the best investment at this time? Was the largest interest to be got upon money invested in the funds or in land?

The EARL of MORLEY observed that it would be easy to get information on the question as to the result of the same amount of capital invested in land or in trade.

EARL GREY, as the Committee was to be so numerous, suggested that it would be well if their Lordships were to adopt a regulation which had been for some time in force (with the best results) in the House of Commons—that was that a Minute should be kept, showing the attendance of each Member of the Committee on each day of the Committee's sitting; so that when the

Report should be presented, the House should know upon whose authority it rested, and that a Report, resting upon the authority of perhaps only three or four noble Lords, should not be supposed to carry with it that of the whole Committee.

The LORD CHANCELLOR thought that the Minute should not only state the names of the noble Lords who attended the Committee each day, but how long they remained in attendance. He had known Committees on which some noble Lords had attended for four or five minutes only.

LORD CAMPBELL said, there was another practice in the House of Commons' Committees which might be adopted with advantage—which was, that the name of every Member who put a question should be prefixed to the question in the Report of the evidence.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON considered that the suggestion of the noble Earl was well worthy their Lordships' consideration and adoption. If the noble Earl would move it as a Standing Order it would receive due consideration.

EARL GREY would adopt the noble Duke's suggestion, and on some day next week would call the attention of the House to the subject by moving a Resolution, the particular terms of which he would give notice of on an early day.

LORD BROUGHAM said, he was just told by the Clerk, that already the name of every Peer who asked a question of a witness in a Committee was taken down. All that was required further was to have it printed.

After some further conversation, the Committee was appointed, the name of the Earl of St. Germans being (at his request) omitted.

THE CASE OF MR. GULSON.

The MARQUESS of LONDONDERRY, in rising, pursuant to the notice which he had given, to ask a question with reference to the causes which led to the removal of Mr. Gulson from the situation of an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in Ireland, said that since he came into the House he had received a letter, which would very much shorten the observations with which he had intended to preface his question. He must in the first place state, that he had had no communication with Mr. Gulson relative to the causes of his dismissal from his high situation. It was entirely unknown to him that he (the Marquess of Londonderry) had given this notice. He would admit that Mr. Gulson sent him a letter six weeks ago, stating the extreme hardship of his case, and the loss of reputation he had sustained in consequence of his having been placed at the bottom of the list of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners in England, instead of being at the head of the Poor Law Commission in Ireland. He did not intend to say that there might not have been sufficient reasons for Mr. Gulson's removal; but he did mean to say that the case was a hard one. It was admitted by all persons that he was one of the best public officers ever sent to Ireland; and had it not been for his indefatigable zeal and ability, the Poor Law would never have been established to the same extent in Ireland, or so perfectly carried out. Adverse as he (the Marquess of Londonderry), as a landed proprietor, was to the introduction of the Poor Law, he was free to allow that he had become a perfect convert, and that he was satisfied that the law would be one of the greatest blessings to Ireland that had ever been bestowed upon that country. It was upon these grounds that he had intended to bring the subject before the House. He was entirely ignorant whether Mr. Gulson's removal originated with the Government or with the Poor Law Commissioners, when he gave notice of his intention to ask the question. If he had known at the time that it had been done by the direction of the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department, he should have been more cautious in bringing the question forward; but he must say, that it was hardly possible for a man in the position of Mr. Gulson not to wish for some tokens of public approbation. The noble Marquess then read the letter to which he had referred:—

"I have received your Lordship's letter, informing me, most kindly, that a sense of justice towards me has induced your Lordship to give notice of a Motion for bringing my case under the consideration of the House of Lords. I am deeply sensible of your Lordship's kind intentions towards me, and of the high value of your Lordship's support on this (to me) painful occasion. As, however, I am still a public servant, anxious to do all in my power for the Government whilst in their service, I am particularly desirous that no step should be taken on my account, which could either annoy or embarrass the Government or the Poor Law Commissioners. It is quite true that by the act of the Government I have been depressed in my official position, and that whilst all my official superiors express their entire 'satisfaction at the whole of my proceedings in Ireland,' and their continued 'confidence in my discretion and zeal,' I am practically sent down to the ranks of the junior Assistant Commissioners, of whom I have for three years been the director, and that I am reduced to the point whence I started twelve years since in

the public service. But I am nevertheless so anxious to do my duty properly, and to trust to the favourable consideration of the Government for my future reward, that I beg your Lordship to permit me to ask you to withdraw your Motion before the House of Lords, and throw my case entirely into the hands of Her Majesty's Government for their future determination."

The noble Marquess concluded by stating, that under these circumstances he should say no more on the subject, and that if he had erred in bringing the matter forward at all, he had erred in a good cause.

EARL ST. GERMANS felt placed in a difficult position, because Mr. Gulson had expressed to him a very strong wish that his case should not become matter of discussion in that House; and he entertained for that gentleman a very sincere respect, and really believed he had discharged his duties in Ireland with the greatest zeal and ability; and yet to be silent would be acquiescing in the implied charge against the Home Secretary, of being guilty of an act of harshness and injustice. It was necessary, therefore, to state, that Mr. Gulson's only grievance was, that he had not been promoted. He was an Assistant Commissioner, and in that capacity conciliated the good will and esteem of the members of the different boards of guardians, and of every other gentleman with whom he came in contact; but he was an officer of the Poor Law Commissioners, and not of the Government; and the former employed him where they thought fit. The Government advised Her Majesty, under the accumulation of business, to appoint a fourth Commissioner, and that Commissioner was directed to proceed to Ireland; and the position of Mr. Gulson was, in some respect, affected thereby, and rendered inferior to what it was before. He found it painful and disagreeable, and the Commissioners thought it would not be advantageous to the public service that he should remain in Dublin, and he was removed to England. It was no disparagement to him that he had not been thought so fit for the new office as Mr. Twisleton, who had discharged a very difficult duty at Paisley in the time of the scarcity; and whether the principle of promotion from the next rank was a good one or not, it had not been the usage of this department to select the senior Assistant Commissioner to be Commissioner. No injustice had been done to Mr. Gulson. He (Earl St. Germans) again bore willing testimony to his zeal and ability, and believed him to be a most efficient public servant; nor had he had any reason to be dissatisfied with that gentleman's conduct or with his judgment, though he did not appear to have exercised a sound discretion in complaining of the conduct of the Home Secretary in selecting another gentleman for the office alluded to.

After a few observations from the Marquess of Londonderry, subject at an end.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, February 17, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—1ª. Friendly Societies.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. By Mr. Thornely, from Merchants, Manufacturers, and others, of the Borough of Wolverhampton, for an Immediate Repeal of the Duty on Foreign Copper Ore.—By several hon. Members, from various places, against Diminishing Protection to Agriculture.—By several hon. Members, from a number of places, for a Total and Immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Mr. Hume, from Manufacturers of Linen and Linen Yarns, in Brechin, for the Abolition of Duty on Linen.—By Mr. Brotherton, from Members of the Leeds Temperance Society, against Reducing the existing Duty on Brandy, or other Foreign Spirits.—By Mr. Christie, from Henry Walter Parker, Barrister at Law, for Inquiry into the Andover Union.—By Viscount Morpeth, from Farmers, Ratepayers, and others, of the Township of Canonley, complaining of unequal Rating.—By Mr. Thomas Duncombe, from Guardians of the Poor of the Parish of St. Luke, Chelsea, against Union with other Parishes.—By several hon. Members, from various places, for limiting the Hours of Labour of Children and Young Persons employed in Factories to Ten.—By Mr. John O'Brien, from Limerick Bridge Commissioners, for Improvement of Limerick Harbour.—By several hon. Members, from various places, against Enrolment of Militia.—By Mr. Balfour, from Magistrates and Town Council of Dunbar, and by Mr. Hume, from Montrose, for Alteration of Prisons (Scotland) Act.—By Mr. Hume, from Shipowners, Merchants, Traders, and others, of the Port of Wells, for Inquiry into Wells Harbour.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

MR. T. S. DUNCOMBE, in pursuance of the Notice he had given, rose to ask leave to bring in a Bill to amend an Act of the fourth and fifth year of his late Majesty Will. IV., relating to friendly societies, in order to give protection to those very valuable institutions. The first Act that had been passed for the regulation of those societies was the 10th Geo. IV., cap. 56, which was amended by the 4th and 5th Will IV., cap. 40. The object of those Acts was declared to be to give greater security and power to extend the objects of friendly societies for any purposes which "were not illegal." Now it would appear to every one not learned in the law, that those words were sufficiently comprehensive; but he was sorry to say, that very lately a doubt had arisen upon the subject, in consequence of a case which had been tried in the Court of Queen's Bench, in which Mr. Justice Wightman had pronounced judgment. That judgment had had the effect of paralysing the certificate given to those societies. The case had

arisen in consequence of a dispute between the directors and one of the members (named Scott) of the South Shields Investment Friendly Loan Society. That society had duly submitted its rules to Mr. Tidd Pratt, who had certified it in 1841. The directors, on the dispute arising with Scott, summoned him duly before the magistrates; but they refused to entertain the case, which was finally and consequently brought before the Court of Queen's Bench, when it was ruled by Mr. Justice Wightman, that the society did not come under the provisions of the law. The learned Judge had said, "I am of opinion this society is not a friendly society, and that the words, 'for any purposes which are not illegal,' must be considered so as to bear some relation to the objects of the Act." Now, it would be probably found that two-thirds of the friendly societies in the kingdom might be disputed on the same grounds, and the object of his Amendment was simply to make more plain the meaning of the words, "purpose which is not illegal." Those societies were most valuable, and it would be a very serious detriment to their utility if they were not supported in time. The Amendment which he was about to propose had received the approval of all the persons connected with loan societies to whom he had submitted it, and it had the approval also of Mr. Tidd Pratt. With respect to the opinion of Mr. Justice Wightman, he should say that the Solicitor General had given another opinion, to the effect that Mr. Tidd Pratt was right in certifying to that very society the rules of which were now doubted. The Solicitor General had given a similar opinion with regard to another friendly society; and when they saw such doubts upon the subject it was evidently highly necessary that they should be removed. He, therefore, asked permission of the House, and the right hon. Baronet, to bring in a Bill to amend the law relating to friendly societies.

Leave given. Bill brought in and read a first time.

THE CATARAQUE.

Mr. HUME moved for—

"Copies of all Reports and Correspondence respecting the loss of the emigrant ship Cataraque, in Bass's Straits, in August last, having 369 emigrants on board;" also a "Copy of the Report of the Officer at Liverpool, on the state of the Cataraque before sailing from Liverpool in April, 1845, and what the length of Contract: Whether the captain and mate had passed any examination, and how long the captain had been at sea."

In moving for those Reports, he had no wish to cast blame on any one; but where they saw out of 415 persons who left Liverpool on board that ship, that no fewer than 369 were lost, it did appear that something should be done to investigate the cause, to prevent a recurrence of such a calamity, and to preserve the lives of people in future. Whether there was a defect in the ship, or whether the officers were to blame —whether the charts on board were defective or incorrect, or whether the lighthouses were wrongly situated (and there he should beg to say, that he hoped all lighthouses would be placed under the management of the Government shortly) he did not mean to say; but he thought that a strict inquiry ought to be instituted.

Mr. G. W. HOPE wished merely to state, without offering any opposition to the Motion, that the vessel alluded to was a remarkably well found ship. She had an experienced captain, and her owners were most respectable. It should also be remembered that out of above 50,000 persons carried out to the Australian Colonies, under a similar system, the unfortunate case under consideration was the very first loss that had been sustained.

Returns ordered.

FAMINE AND DISEASE IN IRELAND.

Mr. O'CONNELL rose to call the attention of the House to the state of famine and disease in Ireland. His intention was to move—

"That this House will, on Monday next, resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to take into consideration the State of Ireland, with a view to devise means to relieve the Distress of the Irish People;"—

and it was a Motion to which he respectfully demanded the utmost attention of the House. The importance of the subject was of itself sufficient to demand attention; but he should have been spared the whole of his labour had it suited the purpose of the right hon. Baronet, in the course of his speech on the previous night, to state what were the intentions of the Government with regard to Ireland. That, he begged to remind hon. Members, was no party question; he certainly introduced the subject without any party motive or party object. He was moved by no partisan feeling; nor did he expect that he should be met by any any party opposition. He was sure that all parties would agree with him in feeling deep anxiety at the prospect of distress; and that thus the House would come fairly to the consideration of the subject, without

bias or prepossession. It was certain that there was a fearful prospect of a most calamitous season before the people of Ireland. The extent of that calamity had been disputed, and there had been a time when there was a prospect of some portion of it being possibly averted; but he believed that hope had now quite vanished. The calamity was pressing, was imminent—more pressing, more imminent, and more fearful than that House was aware of. In order to understand it, it was right that the House should be made aware of the state of Ireland before the calamity had impended. That calamity, they should observe, was not one brought on by any fault of the Irish people. It was not a consequence of the sterility of the Irish soil. The country had enjoyed an abundant harvest. That calamity was a dispensation of Providence, and they should bow to the will of an all-dispensing Power, whilst they fulfilled the duties of charitable Christians, and endeavoured to mitigate the evils that might arise. But to enable them to relieve the distress, it would be necessary for the House to understand the previous state of Ireland; and he was sorry to have to state in the commencement that, from the public documents, it appeared that, for several years past, the population of Ireland, instead of increasing, according to the rules of nature, and as in other countries, had been failing and wasting away. But the condition of the people, especially of the agricultural population, had been long known to be miserably wretched. The agricultural population had been long described as ground down by famine and distress. All accounts agreed in describing them as in a state of actual starvation. Now, he did not propose to call upon the House to believe any mere assertions of his. He had no intention of asking them to believe anything he did not prove by documents. He meant to show, from documents of the most unquestionable character, the increasing misery of the Irish nation. The first document would be an abstract of the Population Returns for 1821, 1831, and 1841, by which the following facts were placed beyond a doubt. Between 1821 and 1831, the population of Ireland increased nearly a million, viz., 965,570 souls; but between 1831 and 1841 the increase had only been about half that number, or 437,980 souls. Attempts had been made to account for this decrease by the increase of emigration; but the argument was most unsatisfactory. Those who used it gave no returns of emigration between 1821 and 1831, but confined themselves to the emigration between 1831 and 1841: there was no reason at all to imagine that the emigration was less between 1821 and 1831, than it had been between 1831 and 1841. This fact, therefore, stared him full in the face. that in ten years the population went back half a million; there was an increase of half a million fewer human beings in Ireland between 1831 and 1841 than there had been between 1821 and 1831. One of the topics in connexion with the state of slavery in the West Indies, which made the strongest impression from the lips of Sir Fowell Buxton, was the circumstance that the black population had decreased; but his case was not so striking as that of Ireland. The next public document to which he begged leave to refer, was the Report of the Commissioners of Poor Law Inquiry in 1835; they had been appointed by the House to investigate the state of destitution in Ireland, and they distinctly stated that 2,300,000 of the agricultural population were in a constant state approaching to starvation. For several weeks in the year they lived on the charity of their neighbours. The last Population Returns of 1841 showed that, out of the whole rural population of Ireland, 46 per cent. lived in a single room; the entire human family and the pigs occupied the same apartment together. The next fact was, that of the civil population—that is, of the inhabitants of towns—36 per cent. lived in a single room, and that two or three families sometimes occupied the same room. Perhaps the most important document of all was the Report of Lord Devon's Commission; it had been directed to that noble Lord and four others, and perhaps a better Commission was never formed by the hands of any Government. It was impossible to believe that they were deceived themselves, or that they meant to deceive others, and the following were the terms they used, warranted by the evidence they had taken, and their own observations:—

"That the agricultural labourers of Ireland suffer the greatest privations and hardships; that they depend upon precarious and casual employment for subsistence; that they are badly housed, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid for their labour; that it would be impossible to describe adequately the sufferings and privations which the cottiers and labourers and their families in most parts of the country endure; that in many districts their only food is the potato, their only beverage water; that their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather; that a bed or blanket is a rare luxury; and that nearly in all,

their pig and their manure heap constitute their only property; that a large proportion of the entire population comes within the designation of agricultural labourers, and endure sufferings greater than the people of any other country in Europe have to sustain."

Hon. Members would recollect that these were not the assertions of demagogues, or even of persons interested in reporting exaggerated scenes of misery; they were the distinct and emphatic statements of men above all suspicion, and beyond the belief that they could have been imposed upon. The rural population in the last census was calculated at seven millions, and five millions of these were in the condition described in the Report of the Earl of Devon's Commission. It was a Report made forty-five years after the Union with England—after the Union with the richest and most industrious country on the face of the earth; and what did the Commissioners say but that the agricultural population of Ireland was badly fed, badly clothed, badly housed—that their food was potatoes, their drink water, and that they endured greater privations than the peasantry of any other country of Europe. He would appeal to hon. Gentlemen who listened to him, whether this was not a frightful state of society. They must remember that the Irish did not govern themselves, that there was no Irish Parliament, and that after a government by England of forty-five years duration, this was the result. He would not enter into all the topics this part of the question presented: he would only put it distinctly to those who heard him, that they were responsible for the present condition of Ireland. If England could not govern her, she ought to abdicate; but if she continued to attempt it, she was bound to rescue the people of Ireland from their present misery. This Report, too, was not made in a year of calamity, a year of famine, but in 1844, when the harvest was abundant, and comparatively little distress was known in Ireland: it was made at a period of comparative comfort, if he might use the expression, of comparative freedom from calamity. It might be said that it was the fault of the Irish people; but Lord Devon's Report did not say so. The Commissioners had reported two points: the first was, that "the patient endurance which the labourers exhibit is deserving of high commendation, entitling them to the best attention of Government and Parliament." The Irish people were therefore not to blame for their misery; and the Commissioners called upon the Government and the Parliament to give their best attention to their condition, with some confidence that the call would be responded to. Another matter of commendation on the part of the Commissioners, was the habits of temperance of the Irish peasantry:—

"Up to this period (they said) any improvement that may have taken place is attributable almost entirely to the habits of temperance in which they have so generally persevered, and not, we grieve to say, to any increased demand for their labour."

In addressing himself, therefore, to the present distressed state of the inhabitants, he carried with him the hope that he had impressed upon the House the real claims of the sufferers. What had they to fall back upon at this moment? Potatoes were their only food—their only drink water; and they had neither bed nor blanket to cover them from the cold. It was singular enough that they were threatened now with this calamity; it was not to be attributed to the population—to any refusal to labour and cultivate the soil. He had two Parliamentary documents before him to show how unfounded was any charge of that kind. The first was this—

"An account of the quantities of wheat, barley, oats, wheat flour, and oatmeal imported into Great Britain from Ireland, in the years 1842, 1843, 1844, and 1845, distinguishing the quantities in each year:—

CORN OF IRISH GROWTH, Imported into Great Britain from Ireland.

Years.	Wheat.	Barley.	Oats.	Wheat Meal, or Flour.	Oatmeal.
	Quarters.	Quarters.	Quarters.	Cwts	Cwts.
1842	112,195	50,287	1,274,326	314,311	1,551,172
1843	192,477	110,449	1,561,997	773,463	1,706,628
1844	200,276	90,656	1,509,870	839,567	1,150,976
1845	372,719	93,095	1,679,958	1,422,379	1,059,185

That Return gave this result; that 2,145,772 quarters of grain were imported from Ireland into England, and 2,481,564 cwts. of flour and meal; showing that there was an abundant crop in Ireland last year; that while her people were starving she produced a large quantity of grain and meal for the consumption of England. The second Parliamentary document he had to refer to, was—

"An account of all cattle, sheep, and swine, imported into Great Britain from Ireland, from the 10th day of October, 1845, to the 5th day of January, 1846. Oxen, bulls, and cows, 32,883; calves, 583; sheep and lambs, 32,576; swine, 104,141."

These two documents proved an anomalous state of society to exist in Ireland; for while the country produced such abundance, the inhabitants were starving. So blessed was she by Providence; so cursed by man! Others might account for it as they could; but the fact was indisputable, that the best state of society there, was the worst in other parts of the globe. Having shown what Ireland was, even in the best times, he would now advert to the extent and formidable nature of the calamity by which she was now visited. The documents he should first employ for this purpose, were such as had been furnished by Government; and with some of them hon. Gentlemen must be familiar: to them the reading might seem tedious; but it was his duty to lay the case of Ireland, in the fullest manner, before the House; and on this account he trusted he should be excused if he offered a few known details. The subsequent passage was contained in the Report of Messrs. Lindley and Playfair, dated November 15, 1845:—

"During our stay in Ireland, we carefully examined such official Papers as were transmitted to us from the Castle; we consulted persons acquainted with the facts of the disease; we visited the district lying between Dublin and Drogheda; and inspected various potato fields and stores in the counties of Dublin, Louth, Meath, Westmeath, and part of Kildare. Judging from the evidence thus collected, and, from what we have seen of the progress of the disease in England, we can come to no other conclusion than that one-half of the potato crop of Ireland is either destroyed or remains in a state unfit for the food of man. We, moreover, feel it our duty to apprize you, that we fear this to be a low estimate."

The next extract he would read was from the Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry at Dublin Castle; and the House would observe that it was a remarkable paragraph:—

"It appears from undoubted authority, that of 32 counties in Ireland, not one has escaped failure in the potato crop; of 130 Poor Law Unions, not one is exempt; of 2,058 electoral divisions, above 1,400 are certainly reported as having suffered; and we have no certainty, until the receipt of the more minute returns, now in progress of completion, that the remaining 600 have altogether escaped."

That Commission had corresponded with nearly all the local authorities in Ireland; and the following was the conclusion at which it had arrived, after having written 362 letters to obtain correct information:—

PROPORTION OF POTATO CROP LAST YEAR.

Provinces.	All.	9-10ths.	4-8ths.	5-4ths.	2-3rds.	Halves.	1-3rds.	1-4ths.	1-5ths.	1-7ths.	1-8ths.	1-10ths.	Total.
Ulster	6	1	3	15	37	133	32	6	...	...	6	...	239
Munster.....	...	...	1	9	13	88	16	4	1	...	1	...	133
Leinster.....	...	4	1	28	41	97	9	2	1	1	...	...	199
Connaught...	...	...	1	8	12	49	6	4	...	...	1	...	81

A more authentic document could not be produced; and the accuracy of its details might, therefore, be fully relied upon. Sir Lucius O'Brien, at first, had been difficult to be persuaded of the extent of the disease in the potatoes; but he had subsequently waited on the Lord Lieutenant, and had admitted that he had been mistaken, and that it prevailed to the excess that had been stated. He need not remind the House of the documents read by the right hon. Baronet in his speech last night. Hon. Members would be aware how fully, deeply, and entirely, they corroborated the representation he had given upon the subject, without any point of mitigation: misery, poverty, famine, and disease, were the fea-

tures belonging to the present wretched state of Ireland. A Committee, called the Mansion House Committee, had been appointed in Dublin, and the utmost care had been taken to collect accurate information. Between the 10th December and 26th January, they issued 923 letters, and had received 523 answers: viz., from Leinster, 141 letters; from Ulster, 163 letters; from Munster, 152 letters; from Connaught, 67 letters. Of these there were—from ministers of the Established Church, 216 letters; from Roman Catholic clergy, 195 letters; from Presbyterian ministers, 40 letters; from lieutenants and deputy ditto, 47 letters; from poor law boards, 25 letters. The following was the degree in which they represented that the potato crop had suffered, and was unfit for human food:—Under one-third, 110; one-third, 111; one-half, 148; over half, 84. Such was the synopsis of the letters and answers. At one period, when the potatoes were stored, and the calamity not immediately before the eyes of the people, they had hoped that it had passed the crisis: that appeared to be a mistake; but whether it were true or false that there was at one time a lull in the disease, it was now quite certain that it was making frightful progress again. He had now to trespass on the patience of the House while he brought under its view other documents, collected from various parts of Ireland, describing the state of the disease in different localities. Unless the occasion were grave and pressing, he should not have felt justified in taking this course; but some of the leading journals within the last ten days had asserted positively that the disease had ceased, and that there was no danger of a want of provisions. He did not accuse the writers of party motives, but of having been easily deluded, and willing to delude others. The conviction that the disease was most destructive was not merely local; it was not confined to a particular district, but from one end of the country to the other the cry was echoed of coming famine. Upon this part of his case he would trouble the House with the subsequent extract of a letter from Tralee, dated the 2nd instant:—

"Potatoes, I regret to say, from the progress of the rot, advanced a third; and this, as I stated a few days past, at a period when the rate of remuneration for agricultural labourers is 2½d. per day, and diet a few wet lumpers. This is low enough, but the tradesmen in this town are not earning that same. The inevitable consequence of this is already manifesting itself. Fever is on the increase both here and in Killarney, and unless the most vigorous efforts are made to facilitate public works, and employ those able and willing to exchange their labour for the means of purchasing commodities for human consumption, the pestilence of 1817, also the result of scarcity, will bear no proportion to what is likely to ensue shortly. In that year disease did not appear until the approach of summer; then the poor creatures lay in dozens in the market-house of Killarney, and in other dilapidated ruins with which that neglected town abounds for a long time past."

The Londonderry agricultural report for January contained the following statements:—

"The wheat plants have made great progress during the month, and have a very healthy appearance, and the grass fields are as forward in their look as we often observe in March. We are sorry to observe so many of the potatoes, which were confidently relied upon for seed, giving way under the disease. Now, after having been subjected to pitting and housing, great quantities of them are found to be rotten; nor are those still in the ground much better, for although apparently sound, a few days after being dry they assume a very different aspect. We still fear the consequences at seed time. Many were disposed to try autumn or winter planting; but the weather has been very untoward for that purpose, and those who tried it report unfavourably of it, the excessive moisture having destroyed the seed."

A respectable farmer in the county of Wexford wrote thus:—

"I said in my last that the apple potatoes that were not rotted might be used for food. Our apples were as dry as possible when we pitted them, and we kept them dry by our manner of covering them. We thought we might have some for summer, but we find they are scarcely fit for cattle now, and more than half of them are completely in pulp. We cannot use any apple potatoes this year, and this is a general complaint here. The cups are not very much lost, but there are ten times more of them rotted than when I wrote last."

The Reverend J. Fitzpatrick, of Castletownroche, county Cork, on the part of a meeting held there, addressed circulars to all the landlords possessing property in the district, containing a minute description of the state of the population. The result was—

"More than half the potato crop is unfit for human food, and the disease is progressing. More than half the labourers are unemployed, and are likely to continue so for the next three months, and during the months of July and August, as the farmers will not have money nor food to give them."

He would now advert to the centre of the country and to the state of the disease there. The first quotation he would make was from a letter from Nenagh, dated Feb. 4:—

"We continue to receive the most distressing

accounts of the fearful progress of the disease from various quarters. In the King's County the complaints are universal. In this county the disease has gone on with amazing celerity within the last three weeks; many persons on examining their pits found their potatoes in some instances altogether useless, not even fit for pigs or cattle. In several districts the poor are pining in the utmost misery, but with unequalled fortitude and patience, hoping, even where there is nothing but religion to assuage their wretchedness. The heavy and constant rains of the last few weeks—raining almost without intermission—have done great injury; and the softness of the weather otherwise tends, in a great measure, to produce that fermentation of the potato which causes its destruction as an article of food. Landed proprietors should endeavour to aid themselves and the people at this tremendous crisis."

The subsequent letter from John F. Hodges, M.D., dated Downpatrick, 2nd February, referred to the condition of the counties of Down, Armagh, Antrim, and Monaghan:—

"During the month of January I had occasion to visit several districts in the counties of Down, Armagh, Antrim, and Monaghan, and I carefully inquired into the state of the potato crop. I found that though there was considerable difference in the amount of loss in the districts examined, yet that everywhere, with a few trifling exceptions in some moory soils in county Monaghan, the disease continued its destructive ravages, unchecked by any of the methods recommended to stop its progress; that in every description of pit, in the moist field, and the dry loft, the potatoes were, either as the farmers expressed it, 'melting away,' or 'shrivelling up with a dry rot.' In some districts in Armagh I was informed that the destruction was progressing with such terrible rapidity, that of potatoes raised, thrice picked, and stored up in pots as free from all taint, not more than one-third was found fit for use some days ago. In the neighbourhood of the city of Armagh, the extent of loss was represented as very great. In the neighbourhood of Markethill and Portadown the loss has been also very great, and will, I fear, be severely felt by the small farmers in that part of the country. In Monaghan I made particular inquiries from several farmers, among whom I may mention the name of Mr. Gowdy, one of the most intelligent agriculturists in the district in which he resides, and I found it to be the general persuasion, that fully two-thirds of the crop, at that time (6th of January), had been rendered unfit for food. Along the north-east coast again, in the neighbourhood of Larne, the destruction has also been great; and several Antrim farmers, whose names if required, can be supplied, have last week assured me that the stock of potatoes which they have at present on hand is not so large as they were in former years accustomed to have in the month of May."

The next document he had to offer presented a peculiar feature well deserving notice: it was an extract of a letter from Tullamore:—

"A great many petty robberies are daily committed about the suburbs of Tullamore, from the great distress and poverty arising from want of employment, together with the scarcity of potatoes and the high price of provisions, the unfortunate people having no other remedy to keep them from starvation. Fever and sickness are on the increase, both in that town and country parts."

From the parish of Killard, in the county of Kildare, they wrote in these terms:—

"It contains sixty-six families, comprising three hundred and seventy-four individuals, having out of their crop of ten hundred and ninety barrels of potatoes but one hundred and six barrels fit for human food. That in the townland of Doonbeg (same parish) there are forty-five families, comprising two hundred and seventy individuals, with but eighty-five barrels of good potatoes out of a crop containing six hundred and sixty-six barrels. That in the townland of Kilfeira (same parish) there are eighty-eight families, whose total produce of potatoes was fourteen hundred and fifty barrels, of which one hundred and eighty-seven barrels only were fit for human food. That in the townlands of Dunmore and Doonbeg (same parish) there are twenty-nine families, or one hundred and twenty-seven individuals, whose total produce was three hundred and seventy-two barrels, of which there were but fifty-eight barrels fit for human use. That in the townlands of Frureeree and Donoughboy at least three-fourths of the crop are lost."

On the want of food in the county of Galway they wrote as follows:—

"The question of famine is no longer one of surmise. Its certainty, in a few months at furthest, is even acknowledged by the Government, and the reports which come in every day from the rural districts but too sadly confirm the conclusion which has been arrived at from the most carefully collected facts. Potatoes bear even now a famine price in the market. White potatoes go 4½d. per stone, and cup potatoes 5d. We believe 10d. per stone, in times of the greatest famine, was the highest price for potatoes ever known in Galway; and when we take into consideration that the potatoes now brought for sale to market are not only diseased to a great extent, but one-third of them completely waste to the purchaser in two or three days, the 4½d. per stone rises in real value to 9d. or 10d. When this is the case at present, what will it not be in a few weeks hence, when the crop is more exhausted? At the price which potatoes are even only now, a labourer employed the whole week at 10d. per day (the usual price of labour in this district is often lower) has to lay out the entire of his week's wages on them alone, if he is even so fortunate as to be able to purchase with it a sufficient quantity of this lowest of human food. There is nothing for any other accompanying article of diet; nothing, unless the belly is stinted of this worst kind of food: nothing for fuel, rent, or clothing; nothing for milk or fish; meat is out of the question. If this is the case at present with the labourer in full employment, how must it fare with the unfortunate creatures who have it only occasionally, or fare with both when food becomes dearer, and is placed totally out of their reach? A troop of the 13th Light Dragoons, from Gort, arrived here on Tuesday, under the command of Captain Hamilton, for the purpose, it is said, of repressing any outbreak among the people which may arise owing to the exportation of corn from this port. Two compa-

nies of the 30th are likewise expected—one from Loughrea, the other from Outerard—to aid the force in garrison if necessary. The dragoons and additional military are expected to be stationed here for some time. This increase of troops is said to have been caused by the posting of a threatening notice last week to the effect that the merchants' stores would be broken up by the people if any further exportation of corn was attempted. Her Majesty's steamer, the Stromboli, arrived at the port of Galway on Monday evening, and anchored at the roadstead."

It was not less remarkable than creditable, that not a single instance of riot, or disturbance of the public peace, owing to the want of food, had yet occurred in any part of Ireland. To the preceding documents he might be allowed to add the following report from the board of guardians at Nenagh :—

"At the weekly meeting of the Nenagh board of guardians on Thursday, 29th January,

Sir T. B. Dancer said: I am sorry to say, at least of my own potatoes, that the disease is progressing; out of eight or nine acres of potatoes which were dug last week, I had four cartloads of them affected with the disease, and within the last fortnight nearly all my cups are failing, the one-third of them at least. In this month and next, which are generally soft months, I am of opinion that the great portion of the potatoes, now apparently sound, will become rotten or diseased. I have also inquired amongst my workmen and tenants, and they all bore the same testimony; and to show you as a proof of what I have stated, that when I lately found the disease so prevalent among my tenants' potatoes, I offered them 10 per cent allowance.

"Mr. Michael Meagher: I am bound to tell you this—that for the last three days I had been in Borrisoleigh; it is strange to say that it is not the black potatoes are going, but the white and sound ones, which were heretofore not diseased, or affected with the regular lot.

"Mr. John Kennedy: It is a general complaint that it is the sound potatoes that are failing under the malady, and not the black ones.

"Sir Thomas Dancer: What do you call 'black ones?'—The previously diseased potatoes.

"Mr. Hayes: There is no doubt but the disease is every day becoming more prevalent.

"Chairman: I am afraid that the opinions of the guardians are unanimous on that subject; but as far as I am concerned myself, I can say to the contrary."

At Tralee Poor Law Union a meeting had been held on the 3d inst., to present a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, and the subsequent was a report of what passed on that occasion :—

"Mr. Trant, introducing his motion that a committee be appointed to draw up a memorial to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, on the subject of the expected famine, regretted to say that there was even then more reason for the board carrying out his motion than when he had given notice of it, for he could assure them that the disease was rapidly extending in his district.

"Mr. Foran, the poor rate collector for the barony of Corkaguiny, said he was sorry to be obliged to acquaint them that in some parishes in his barony one-half of the crop was lost. Potatoes were unusually high in price, too, at one side of Dingle; the minions were 12s. a peck (32 stone). The disease was, in his opinion, decidedly on the increase.

"Mr. Quinlan thought that out of two farms of his he would not have a sound potato on May day. The spread of the disease was frightful.

"Mr. Rae was sorry to be obliged to corroborate what had been said about the spread of the epidemic; and, to make the matter still worse, the late high tides had washed away a quantity of the potatoes of the poor people in his neighbourhood, the parish of Keel.

"Captain Chute, Mr. Gorham, and other guardians, bore testimony to the spread of the disease.

"Colonel Stokes could state, from personal knowledge, that labourers in the vicinity of the Spa were now purchasing potatoes in the market, not having any of their own. Lumper potatoes were selling at 24s. per peck. At the rate potatoes were selling on Saturday last, potatoes sufficient to support the family of a labouring man for a week would cost upwards of 6s., 2s. more than the entire week's wages of most labourers in employment. He might in the present season safely say that two-thirds of the labourers were unemployed. He had paid 12s. a peck for diseased potatoes to feed cattle, in the market last week, and good lumpers were 24s., and minions 32s. per peck. In conclusion, he urged on the Board the necessity of representing to Government that they were willing that a tax should be levied on the properties of gentlemen, both resident and absentee, to provide food for the poorer classes, in the event of a famine.

"Mr. Trant's motion was seconded by Colonel Stokes, and passed, and a committee was appointed."

At Youghal a public meeting had been held on the 11th instant, and what passed was contained in the following report of the proceedings :—

"The Rev. Mr. Smiddy said: Mr. Chairman, as I am in possession of certain documents connected with the state of distress, I shall occupy your attention while making a few observations on the subject. A short time since, by order of the Poor Law Commissioners in Dublin, inquiries were made in several parts of the Union as to the state of the potato crop, the result of which was forwarded to the Poor Law Commissioners. This was set on foot here, and inquiries were very accurately and minutely instituted, and the result of that is such as to convince every person that something must be done in order to provide for the approaching season of want and scarcity. By this arrangement we had parties appointed in several districts of the country to inquire what supply of potatoes remained on hand, and what amount of labour or employment was available for the people; the result is that in the country parts of this parish the farmers have only a supply sufficient for their own consumption, with the exception of two or three farmers, one of whom would be able to send twenty barrels to market in case the present supply remain free from disease, and that farmer is from the neighbourhood of Windgap. We have procured accurate information in reference to those persons who are objects

of destitution. With regard to the labouring population, many of them are already obliged to live on the diseased potatoes, and the large body have only a supply which they expect will not last longer than two months [sensation]. That is the state of the potato crop in the country, and the amount of employment is very small indeed. Some of them, it has been ascertained, have only employment for nine months of the year, while others are only employed for five and six months during that period. The state of things in the town is even still worse. We all know that a general calamity has befallen the country with respect to the potato crop, and this misfortune must be more generally felt in large towns, as there is no supply of food there, as in the country, to relieve or alleviate the lamentable visitation. Inquiries have been made in several lanes in this town, and I am confident this meeting will be appalled and astonished at the result of the investigation. The Rev. Mr. Smiddy here read an abstract of the condition of the inhabitants of lanes in Youghal who lived by manual labour, showing the number of families and individuals, and the portion of the year, up to six months, to which the employment of more than a moiety is limited. From this return it appeared—

	Families.	Persons.
That there are living in lanes ...	908.....	4,579
Living on charity	88.....	356
Employed only 3 months, and less	56.....	235
Ditto, four months	72.....	253
Ditto, five months	95.....	453
Ditto, six months	228.....	1,245
	539.....	2,642

So that 539 families out of the 908, and 2,642 individuals out of the 4,579, are limited in employment, all to six months; many of them to three and four months of the year; and the wages, in many instances, so low as scarcely to give them subsistence, even for the time they are employed. This (continued the rev. gentleman), is a problem for the political economist; and a subject of serious reflection for all who are interested, not alone in the welfare, but in the actual existence of their fellow creatures. And such being the state of the distress, such being the amount of destitution, it is evident that something must be done, and done immediately, to remedy the awful circumstances of the people.

"Mr. Lomaseny, though a resident in the town for thirty-six years, had no idea of the destitution which he saw in Donovan's-lane; in that place there were six individuals living upon a floor ten feet square; there was not as much straw for them to lie upon as would be allowed a favourite dog—the covering at night consisted of the remnant of one blanket, with clothes which they wore during the day! In other places similar sights were to be seen; similar, and perhaps, if possible, more frightful poverty was to be witnessed."

There was no distinct specification of the sufferings of the poor in towns and cities; but, according to the Report of Lord Devon, they were most afflicting. He would trouble the House with one more letter; it was from Lord Cloncurry, and was in the following form, addressed to the editor of the *Dublin Evening Post*:—

"February 9, 1846.

"My dear Sir—I think it right to mention to you that I planted some potatoes last November in lazy beds, the soil rich, maiden, and dry; the seed of the best kind, mostly cut, but some whole; the kinds, purple kidneys and pink eyes. On examining them last week I find one-third decayed, after making shoots. This is bad news: but it is better to give timely information. It was for this purpose I gave my time to the Mansion House Committee, the members of which appeared to me to have no other object in view, but the service of their fellow creatures. I believe the statement contained in several hundred letters directed to me, contained more true and early information than all the costly Reports and Commissions of the Government; and I believe that if some of the measures we recommended were adopted, they would have afforded a cheaper and more effectual relief than any suggested by salaried advisers. There is in the country at this moment corn more than enough to feed our entire population; by establishing stores or granaries in the poorhouses and other places, into which the farmers could send their corn, receiving in return a note as to the quantity, it would prevent the great loss which takes place every year by want of proper corn stands or barns through the country; it would be at hand if wanted, and if not, it could be sold in May or June at probably an advanced price, which would pay all expense. I have advocated the establishment of public granaries for many years, from a knowledge of their great utility in many parts of the Continent; and in no country would they be so beneficial as in Ireland, where almost all the farming classes are unprovided with the necessary corn stands and stores. It would have been much more becoming of the Government to listen to the advice of the Mansion House Committee, and to profit of the information they could have given gratis, than to desire their understrappers and officials to deny the existence of the danger, and to insist upon it that our accounts were exaggerated, and more political than patriotic.—Dear Sir, your humble servant,

"Cloncurry."

Reluctant as he (Mr. O'Connell) was to continue the dulness necessarily produced by the perusal of a succession of documents, he felt that this was a matter of too much importance not to require the fullest information. He wished the House to understand that scarcity in Ireland had always been attended with typhus fever: no matter what change of air might be procured, the disease did not seem affected by the atmosphere: but it always ceased when food became abundant. Thus cause, effect, and cure, were obvious. The cause, was want of due nourishment; the effect, typhus fever; and the cure, a supply of the necessaries of life. He would furnish four or five instances of famine in Ireland, showing that fever ceased when the period of harvest arrived—

"1734. Snmmer wet, autumn variable, winter mild; harvest bad, much straw, and little grain. 1735. Summer again cold and wet, autumn wet, winter open; fruits and grain very backward. 1736. One of the hottest summers remembered,

autumn fair, winter open. Pestilential fever appeared in winter of 1734, continued through 1735, became very frequent and fatal in summer of 1736-and disappeared in autumn of the same year, which brought a most abundant harvest. 1740. Spring dry and cold, summer dry, autumn unusally frosty, winter frosty. Great dearth of provisions this autumn, 1740, which proceeded almost to a famine in winter, the potatoes having failed, while other provisions bore double or treble their usual price. Fever appeared in summer of 1740, increased in autumn, and rose to a terrific degree of violence in spring and summer of 1741. 80,000 persons died of fever and dysentery in this epidemic. The fever which had begun last autumn returned in spring, and raged through the summer of 1741.

"It was computed that one-fifth of the inhabitants died, though probably with exaggeration. 1741. Spring dry, summer dry, autumn variable, winter frosty. Plenty of good corn in autumn of 1741, fruits of the earth duly matured, winter concluded healthy, and the bills of mortality sunk conspicuously. 1742. Spring dry, summer hot, autumn variable, winter stormy and frosty. Provisions most plentible; bread sold at twenty-one pounds six ounces for a shilling. 1743. The summer and autumn were remarkable for health, as well as for fertility, and plenty in large crops of corn of all sorts; and we had scarce any disease then or in winter, except cold and sore throat, from which we are seldom exempted."

The next period to which he would refer was the year 1798. The hon. and learned Gentleman then read as follows:—

"In 1798 summer and autumn wet, crops scanty, fuel scarce. Gentry flying out of the country, poor out of employment, tillage neglected, consequent starvation. Fever prevalent in the spring of 1798; spread in the end of summer to a frightful extent. In 1799, summer wet and cold; general deficiency in crops. Fever now assumed a most malignant type. In 1800, summer unusually hot and dry, but followed, like the previous wet summer, with deficient crops; the crops, moreover, of very bad quality; the people in a state of starvation. Malignant fever continued from 1798. In 1801, most abundant harvest; fever began to decline, and disappeared in the summer of 1802."

He now came to 1817; the following were the characteristics of the period:—

"In 1817, crops of the preceding year very deficient, did not arrive at maturity; corn was uncut in November, much of it lost; corn saved was green in the husk or matted; potatoes scanty, wet, unripe; no straw even for the beds of the poor; turf also deficient. This combined deficiency of food, fuel, and bedding, felt most severely in winter and spring of 1816-17, when fever appeared, which became very prevalent in summer of 1817. Spring and summer wet, cold, and unproductive as the preceding year. In 1818, spring moist; summer unusually hot; crops good; provisions in abundance. The epidemic which had arisen in spring of 1817 continued to increase at a rapid rate through summer, winter, spring, and summer again, until the autumn of 1818, which brought with it a most abundant supply of food, fuel, and straw for bedding. Fever at the very same time began to decline, and soon after disappeared. One million and a half of the population suffered from fever in this epidemic. In 1826, potato crop of the preceding year (1825) very deficient. The weavers in Dublin were, by a sudden reverse of trade, thrown out of employment to the number of 20,000. Fever appeared rising rapidly in the spring of 1826, reached a terrific height in the autumn and winter following, declined in summer of 1827, and disappeared in autumn. The autumn of 1827 produced an almost unparalleled abundance of crops."

There was one other calamity connected with scarcity which had been observed and commented upon by a medical gentleman in Dublin, one of the very first in his profession—he meant Dr. Corregan. The following were his remarks:—

"I cannot conclude without noting a warning circumstance that has had some influence with me in bringing out these observations at the present time. It has been remarked by all the observations at the present time. It has been remarked by all the observers of the epidemic fevers in Ireland—by Rogers, O'Connell, Rutty, Barker, and Cheyne, that small-pox had invariably prevailed, either immediately before or with each visitation of it. The same connexion between small-pox and the bad fevers which ravaged England in the 16th and 17th centuries, has been observed by medical writers. Sydenham has gone so far as to say, that from their intimate connexion, he doubts that the plague and small-pox may not be of the same nature, only with different forms of development. It seems as if the human constitution, under whatever influences have acted injuriously on vegetable organization, or have predisposed to epidemic fever, had lost so much of its energy as to render it less able to resist infection. Small-pox has been of late very prevalent in Ireland. I subjoin a table of the admissions and deaths from it in the Hardwicke Hospital for the last four years:—

	Total No. of Admissions.	No. of Small-pox cases. Admitted.	Cured.	Died.
1842	1,553	22	17	5
1843	1,551	18	14	4
1844	1,769	5	5	0
1845	2,413	86	71	15

This visitation should put us on our guard. It may have come to us as a warning. With our previous experience we should not neglect it. We know the danger that threatens us. We may combat it, should it come, but we can do more. We can prevent its attack. If there be no famines there will be no fever; and if active and timely exertion be made to afford sufficient employment and wages to our people, I believe there will be neither famine nor fever."

The hon. and learned Gentleman continued—I have shown you our distress. I have shown that there are no agricultural labourers, no peasantry in Europe, so badly off—suffering such privations as do the great body of the Irish people. In no part of Europe, I repeat, is there such suffering as in Ireland. There there are five millions of people always on the verge of starvation. I have shown you from Government documents—from an enormous load of documents, taken from, and referring to, all parts of Ireland, that its people are threatened—that they

are in the utmost danger of a fearful famine, with all its concomitant horrors. I may be asked what I propose? I answer, that I call upon all the Members of this House to join in the most energetic measures to stop the impending calamity. You cannot be too speedy—you cannot be too extensive in your remedies. It may be said that I am here to ask money to succour Ireland in her distress. No such thing. I scorn the thought. I am here to say Ireland has resources of her own. You have a revenue from the woods and forests of Ireland. You spent 74,000*l.* within the last few years on Trafalgar-square. Let that revenue represent a capital of a million or a million and a half. Why, then, borrow on the credit of that fund. You may borrow a million, and have a sinking fund. You may do more. You may borrow money on the rents of the Irish landlords. Borrow money, I say, and bring in an income-tax charging the absentee landlords 20 per cent., and resident landlords 10 per cent. The object is to protect the labouring population from an impending calamity. They are even now surrounded by disease and death in their most horrid forms. And it is fitting that we should make the landlords contribute in such a way as shall be effectual. You may tell me of the Poor Laws. My opinion is that Poor Laws may mitigate distress in ordinary seasons, but will not meet a famine. The workhouses would make very good hospitals for the sick. That fever prevails in Cork, Tralee, and Killarney, I have proved to you; it has raged to a frightful extent in Limerick; the number of patients in the infirmaries has increased; the lanes of Dublin are full of fever. You are not to be guided in such a case as this by ordinary rules. It is a case beyond every rule. The people are not to blame. It has pleased Providence to inflict this calamity upon them; it is your business to mitigate that calamity as much as possible. There are the railroads, for example. Why do you not take strong measures with railroads? I should be happy to see the Government authorized to act in reference to these. I should wish to see this House and the other support the Government in that course. I would dispense with the rules and regulations that fence railway schemes brought before Parliament. Famine is coming on—fever is coming on—this House ought to place in the Queen's Government powers adequate to such an exigency, so that it may have the means of giving the most extensive employment. As to contending lines, I do not know but the Government would decide better; for I don't know a worse tribunal than this House. I found myself yesterday voting on a railway question without exactly knowing what I was doing; I cannot, therefore, blame others. But wherever 100,000*l.* has been subscribed for a railway, the Government ought to have power to give another 100,000*l.* by way of loan, so as to afford every facility for proceeding with the works, and to leave private individuals at liberty to apply the funds thus left for a time in their hands in such a manner as to give further employment. Lend the money to the railways at 1 per cent. or 2 per cent. I know how many objections may be started to such a plan; but I speak of a case which is superior to every objection. Great evils require great remedies; the remedy ought to be commensurate with the evil; and I am speaking from the depth of my conviction when I declare that in my conscience I believe the result of neglect on the part of this House in the present instance will be deaths to an enormous amount. On the grounds which I have stated, I request the appointment of a Committee of the whole House, if with no other effect, at least for the purpose of convincing the Irish people that their calamities are not disregarded. I don't blame the Government for what they have done, and for what they purpose to do. They have had my humble support. I have not been peddling for objections to their measures. I am prepared to give an honest support to any plans which the Government may bring forward for the purpose of mitigating the effects of the scarcity. Yet, those which have been propounded are miserable trifles; they would do for ordinary times and for an ordinary scarcity; but they will not answer when death is abroad. The details into which I felt it my duty to enter have made my statement necessarily a dry one; and, for the extreme patience with which I have been heard, I beg to express to the House my own thanks and the thanks of the Irish people. The hon. and learned Gentleman concluded by proposing his Motion.

Sir J. GRAHAM said: I am sure I express the general sense of the House when I declare that the hon. and learned Gentleman, in bringing forward this subject, is entitled to the respectful attention of every hon. Member. The state of Ireland at the present moment deserves the anxious and serious attention of Parliament; and

I admit to the hon. and learned Gentleman, that the importance of this subject can hardly be over-estimated. I also agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman, that whatever differences of opinion may exist between various parties in this House, yet that the difficulty and danger to which he has called our attention will receive from all sides a patient and anxious consideration. Sir, it is my painful duty to state, that having taken the utmost pains to inform myself accurately of the facts of the case, I cannot say that in any important particular the hon. and learned Gentleman has exaggerated the present evils in the condition of Ireland. What are the striking facts? The hon. and learned Gentleman states that a very large proportion of the potato crop of the present year has failed in Ireland: before we consider the effect of that statement it is necessary to remember what is the portion of the whole population of Ireland dependent almost exclusively on the potato for daily food. The hon. and learned Gentleman has estimated that portion of the population at 5,000,000. I should estimate it somewhat lower; but it is admitted on all hands that one-half of the entire population of Ireland is dependent on the potato for food. Now, consider the effect of one-half of the entire population being dependent upon the plant, which by the visitation of Providence has this year signally failed; it is very difficult to ascertain, by any calculation that can be made, the exact extent of that failure. Dr. Playfair and Dr. Lindley, at an early period of this visitation, estimated the loss at one half of the entire crop. Admitting, for a moment, that there may be some exaggeration in this estimate, I will state to the House the result of the extensive and accurate inquiry which the Government, with all its resources, has been able to make. Early in November last the Government constituted a Commission to inquire, composed of officers, all responsible to the Government, as the best mode of ascertaining the facts of the case. At the head of this Commission was placed Mr. Lucas, long Under Secretary for Ireland, a Gentleman known in the House as the representative of an Irish county, conversant with all the affairs of that country, and certainly well entitled to be intrusted with the conduct of such an inquiry. Under him were placed Colonel Jones, the head of the Board of Works; Colonel Macgregor, the head of the Constabulary, who had the means of obtaining information from the most remote parts of the country; Mr. Twisleton, the Poor Law Commissioner in Ireland, who was in communication with the boards of guardians of all the Unions; Sir Randolph Routh, the Commissioner General, and Professor Kane. The result of their inquiries was stated last night by my right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel), in some of its most striking features; and I fear that in the larger number of electoral divisions throughout Ireland the estimate of Dr. Playfair and Dr. Lindley, so far from being falsified, is unfortunately but too strictly verified. In ordinary years, with an average crop of potatoes, it is always the case that for a period of six weeks after the old crop is consumed, and before the new one comes into use, the population is compelled to subsist on a food of a higher and more expensive kind. Suppose the exaggeration of the present failure is one-half; assuming, for the sake of argument, that the failure is only one-fourth of an average crop, you then have this state of affairs; in addition to the six weeks during which, in ordinary years, this population, dependent on potatoes, is obliged to subsist on a dearer kind of food, there will be four months of the present year during which 4,000,000 of the population must be fed on food of a bigher quality than in ordinary years. A more alarming case has hardly ever been submitted to the consideration of Parliament. It is not ordinarily the duty of Parliament to provide food for the people; but it is the imperative duty of the Government, and I am sure it will be the natural impulse of a representative assembly, under such circumstances, sympathizing with a population in such distress, to admit that general rules must bend to such a necessity; nor could the circumstances of a country so unhappily ciruumstanced be disregarded by the Government. But is this the whole of the case? The information we have received, with perfect accuracy, does not extend to a later period than the end of January; but what we have received within the last fortnight is quite confirmatory of the statement of the hon. and learned Gentleman—that the disease, so far from being arrested, has progressed; that the potatoes in the pits have not kept well, but have decayed; and that there is great danger of sudden and early want, unless further precautions are used in time. If seed, too, is not preserved for the ensuing year, the difficulty, great as it is at the present moment, is but the com-

mencement of a series of evils of such an extent that I hardly dare to contemplate them. I must also state, that I entirely concur with the hon. and learned Gentleman, that the conduct of the Irish peasantry generally, in the midst of such great distress, and of such alarming prospects, has been most excellent. There have been no tumultuary meetings, no riots; all has been borne with the utmost patience. I have one account of 190 labourers who came to meet the guardians of a Union, to state that food was failing them; that all they wanted was work; that none was offered them; that they had no labour within their reach. They did not tumultuously demand admission into the workhouse; all they asked was work for wages. A more touching case than this cannot be conceived. Hunger and destitution, when they fall on those willing to work, and who cannot find employment, may well give rise to despair. The hon. and learned Gentleman has stated with great accuracy the general state of want and deprivation among that suffering and gallant people. From some of the facts the hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned, I should be inclined to draw different conclusions from those he has drawn. If it is the fact that the population of Ireland has not been increasing so much of late years, I should doubt if that is any proof of the increase of poverty; I believe that a superabundant population is one of the consequences of extreme poverty. The fact is, that the manufacturing prosperity of England and Scotland attracts large numbers of people from Ireland to partake of it. In Manchester, Glasgow, and Liverpool, there are immense numbers of Irish congregated, exercising an exemplary industry in pursuits incidental to that manufacturing prosperity. The hon. and learned Gentleman has also observed that the imports of corn and cattle from Ireland to England have increased. I cannot regard that circumstance with anything approaching to regret. My confident opinion is, that as those imports have increased, the wealth of Ireland must naturally have accumulated. The cultivation of wheat has also been improving in Ireland, and within the last few years the export of wheat from Ireland has not increased: I believe, therefore, that it has entered more into the consumption of that country. But these are passing observations in reference to the general condition of the people. I now wish to point out to the House what the Government has done to meet this great emergency; the difficulty of which I am not in the least disposed to underrate. Early in November last the Government appointed the Commission I have already alluded to. Up to the present time the principal occupation of that Commission has been to ascertain the facts of the case. Unhappily, those facts are now well ascertained; and the extent of the danger, it must be admitted, is very great, and the time has arrived when it is necessary that executive measures should be speedily taken. With this view Her Majesty's Government have thought it expedient to reduce the number of the Commission, as some of the gentlemen forming it were unable to attend uninterruptedly to its duties; its functions will henceforth devolve on three officers—Mr. Twisleton, Professor Kane, and Sir Randolph Routh. Short as the present Session of Parliament has been, considerable progress has been made in measures involving public grants and advances for public works, to aid in meeting the emergency of the case. This House has already given its consent to a Public Works Bill, by which an absolute grant of 50,000*l.* is made from the public funds; there is also a Ports and Harbours Bill, containing a further grant of 50,000*l.* The Drainage Bill contains clauses which provide for the improvement of the inland navigation of Ireland connected with draining of lands, comprehending four great works, for joining the northern loughs with the navigation of the Shannon and the waters of the west. The Government has given a separate consideration to the estimates for these four great works; and it will be prepared to bring them under the notice of the House in a Committee of Supply. The estimate for these works is not less than 120,000*l.*; altogether no less than 220,000*l.* in the shape of grants will be applied to the increase of public works in Ireland. With respect to advances of money as loans, under the Drainage Bill, which now stands for the third reading, an advance of 50,000*l.* will be made for preliminary expenses; on the Ports and Harbours Bill 2,000*l.* will be advanced for the same purpose; on the County Works Bill there will be an advance of 100,000*l.* Altogether the advance in the shape of loans will be 228,000*l.*, in grants 220,000*l.*; thus as loans and as grants no less a sum than 448,000*l.* would be laid out in public works in Ireland. The hon. and learned Gentleman has referred more particularly to the railroads

now under the consideration of Parliament. Allow me to call to the recollection of the House that in the last Session of Parliament and the Session preceding it, Railroad Acts passed, by which it is generally assumed that an outlay of 9,000,000*l.* will be made in Ireland in the next three years. But I should be sorry if the House deceived itself by thinking that this capital thus brought to bear on the labour market will prove a sufficient provision. From a Report laid on the Table of the House, it appears, from a competent authority, that meney spent in such works only operates beneficially within a distance of from five to ten miles on each side of the line of railroad. What is the effect of that? Unfortunately it is only the able-bodied men who are attracted by that employment from a distance; they leave their wives and families in the places they come from, sometimes entirely destitute. Such is the particular nature of the difficulty, that a railroad, or long line of railroads, at great intervals, will not meet the case. The difficulty is this—in all former cases the potato crop has only failed in districts and counties; but at the present time it is widely different, as the hon. and learned Gentleman stated, on evidence that cannot be doubted: there is not a county in Ireland in which the unfortunate calamity does not to some degree exist. Out of 130 Poor-Law Unions, not one has escaped it; out of 2,000 subdivisions of these Unions, in 1,500 at least the disease has appeared. The calamity is widely spread in different degrees, and thus the difficulty of the operation of a remedy is quite equal to the extent of the danger. The hon. and learned Gentleman says the Poor Law is quite insufficient to meet the evil. I agree with him, considering the nature of the Poor Law in Ireland—under which no claim to relief is gained even by destitution, from the size of the Unions, and the small number of workhouses yet built—that the Poor Law is insufficient to meet the case. I have stated to the House already some of the steps the Government has taken; and I hope the House will give the Government credit for not having neglected any precaution which prudence and sympathy for the sufferings of the people render necessary. I am pressed to give the details of the instructions the Government has issued with respect to these measures; but as I consider any detailed statement of them would not be consistent with the public interest, I hope the House will not expect any such detail. It will be sufficient for me to say that in no one particular has the extreme difficulty of the case been overlooked: early in November instructions were given specifically upon all the leading points; and I can assure the hon. and learned Gentleman and the House that, be the calamity as extensive as it may, Her Majesty's Government will not be taken by surprise. The hon. Gentleman has stated that in Ireland destitution from a failure of the potato crop is always followed by fever of a most malignant kind. In this respect I think the Poor Law does afford most important assistance. Under the existing Poor Law, cases of fever can be relieved in four different ways: the person may be received into the workhouse, or removed from the workhouse to the Fever Hospital. I see an objection to the admission of fever cases into the workhouse, as it may tend to spread infection; and by the law as it now stands, except from the workhouse, there is no power to remove the patient to the hospital. I have not much reliance on these two provisions; but there are two others which I think of immense importance if brought into full operation. The first gives the power of erecting temporary fever hospitals in the vicinity of each workhouse; out of 110 Unions which have workhouses built, forty-two have already temporary fever hospitals provided. Measures have been taken in the remaining Unions for compelling this accommodation to be provided where it does not now exist; and a power is also given to the guardians to hire houses for that purpose. In Galway, in 1844, there was a malignant typhus fever, and I am told that nearly 1,100 patients were received in the temporary fever hospital connected with the workhouse of that Union, and 1,000 patients were discharged convalescent. I admit it is possible that even these provisions may be insufficient to meet the exigency of the case; and I am prepared, on the part of the Government, to ask leave to bring in a Bill on this subject, founded on the precedent of the cholera hospitals of 1832. If the disease should spread, this Bill will be proposed as a temporary enactment, providing that a temporary rate shall be levied in each Union to meet the cost of maintaining the fever patients. I am not aware that I need go at greater length into these circumstances on the present occasion; and I must say, I am most unwilling that this discussion should be prolonged, or should have the effect of

interrupting for two hours the progress of the important debate in which the House is engaged. My humble opinion, an opinion sincerely and confidently entertained is, that in the present circumstances it is the first and primary duty of the Legislature to remove all restrictions on the free importation into this country of all articles of the first necessity constituting the food of the people. I am satisfied this is the first duty of Parliament; and I think the hon. and learned Gentleman will see, notwithstanding the measures he has mentioned, if this calamity should spread to the extent we apprehend, that it is necessary to call on Parliament for a generous exercise of that great virtue inherent in a representative assembly—that of allowing the sufferings of no part of the people to be neglected, when public aid can be afforded for that necessity—I hope, then, that the House, without further delay, will proceed to take that primary step, and will consider the all-important and special necessity of relaxing the restrictions on the importation of food into this country.

Mr. SHAW accepted the invitation of the hon. and learned Gentleman (Mr. O'Connell) to approach that question without irritation or party spirit. He would not willingly say a word that could check the sympathies of the House or the Government towards his poor and always suffering fellow countrymen; but, as the question of the potato failure in Ireland had become so prominent in the debates of the House, and so paramount in influencing the measures of the Government, he thought it right to inform the House of the real facts of the case, as he believed them to be, without adding to or taking from them. The statement of the hon. and learned Gentleman must be borne in mind, that there was scarcely a season in Ireland, especially towards its close, that there was not scarcity and consequent distress in many parts of the country. The Poor Law Commissioners had, as quoted by the hon. and learned Gentleman, reported, that for some portions of every year, upwards of two millions of the population were without the means of procuring food, and in a state of destitution. That there would be an aggravation of the usual periodical distress during the ensuing season, he grieved to say he could not doubt; but still he was bound to add, that he considered very exaggerated statements had been put forth, and undue alarm excited on the subject. He desired to speak with great caution and diffidence on a question upon which so much learning and science had been employed, and which involved not only the comforts, but, literally speaking, the vital interests of a large portion of the community. He had every respect for the high character and attainments of Dr. Playfair and Mr. Lindley; but he must remark, that when in November they reported that at a low estimate one-half of the potato crop was destroyed, there was no practical man in Ireland who did not believe that they had been imposed upon. With regard to the Report that had lately been laid upon the Table, dated in January, from the Commissioners of Inquiry, he concurred in it, to the extent that, more or less, the potato crop had been affected in every part of Ireland, and that every possible precaution should be taken against famine. He had heard the letters of Sir David Roche, and those others, which the right hon. Baronet had read with such effect to the House the night before. He gave those Gentlemen every credit for sincerity and good feeling; but while the letters gave him pain, they did not surprise him, as they were from those parts of Ireland where he knew the disease to be most prevalent. He could not pretend to such information as could enable him to form a perfectly accurate opinion; but he had taken great pains, and had some opportunities of informing himself on the subject. He had, during the autumn and winter, visited and made personal inquiries in the counties of Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Carlow, and Wicklow, besides the county of Dublin, in which he resided; he had had correspondence with most parts of Ireland; he saw about him some friends who could speak for Donegal, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Down, and generally of the north of Ireland, and the large and important county of Mayo. He had communicated with contractors of potatoes for large establishments, such as gaols and workhouses, and he had watched the markets since the panic had ceased. The result of all which was, that, he believed, in most parts of Ireland there was still an average crop, while in some there would be a considerable deficiency—an admission quite sufficient to justify every precaution the Government could take against even the possible calamity of a partial famine. He would gladly support all their measures for giving employment to the labouring population, and alleviating the distress of the destitute poor in Ireland. All he had

risen for was to deprecate the exaggeration of, while he did not desire to understate, the evil. He might have been tempted by some of the concluding observations of the right hon. Baronet (Sir James Graham), in reference to the Corn Laws, to show that a use had been made of the potato failure in Ireland, neither justified by the facts nor by fair reasoning; but he would reserve himself on that point for what he considered a more fitting occasion—the Adjourned Debate on the general question of the Corn Laws which was to be again resumed that night.

Sir J. GRAHAM hoped that if the hon. and learned Gentleman believed the Government to be intent on providing every remedy that could be expected or was necessary, he would not press his Motion on the present occasion, but consent to leave it in the hands of the responsible advisers of the Crown.

Mr. J. O'CONNELL said, he had always voted for a repeal of the Corn Laws, for he thought such a course demanded by the claims of humanity and justice. It was not likely, then, that he should wantonly throw impediments in the way of the great measure then before the House. He did not doubt that the measure would be beneficial to the Empire and to Ireland in its ultimate results. But no doubt the immediate benefits flowing from it would be most felt by the people of England, and not by those of Ireland, who were without the means to purchase bread. If any failure, too, should take place in the effects prognosticated from this measure, from the monopoly which Ireland had enjoyed in supplying food to this great market, she must suffer most severely. He did not believe that such failure would occur; still so long as the issue was in any uncertainty, it was natural the Irish people should wish that measures calculated to provide against any evils that might accrue, should meet their share of discussion. He therefore should be pardoned if he asked the House to delay a little upon these. With regard to the arguments of the learned Recorder against the existence of any failure of the potato crop in Ireland, he left the quarrel to be settled between the right hon. Gentleman and the Government. The official documents brought forward by Government corroborated the statements made on his (Mr. J. O'Connell's) side of the House; and until the right hon. Gentleman could invalidate those documents, they must be taken as the best evidence which the House had before it of the existing state of things in Ireland. The right hon. Secretary for the Home Department deplored the redundancy of the population in Ireland. He believed it was well known that Ireland produced as much as would feed three times her present population. She could not, then, be said to be over peopled, if it were not that something radically wrong in the Government deprived the people of a fair share in the produce of the soil. The right hon. Gentleman, too, expressed his satisfaction at the increase of our exports. Undoubtedly if Ireland had the management of her own resources, if the country could develop all its natural advantages, even a larger amount of exports might be spared to this country than she now supplied, as the people would be well assured of a sufficient supply of food. But it was certainly a most startling anomaly to have large quantities of corn exported from Ireland before the eyes of a starving people. He could bring forward, if necessary, many proofs to confirm the mournful accounts from that country. He had good reason to attest the strict accuracy of the statements respecting the distress of Ireland which had been made to the House, and from his own experience and observation was further enabled to say, that instead of being exaggerated those statements fell short of the truth. He willingly bore his testimony to the attention paid to the subject of Irish distress, which he had remarked since his arrival in this country to be generally prevalent among all parties; but he alluded more particularly to the great anxiety manifested by the Members of the House to take some measures to remedy the threatened evils. It was an obvious reflection that the interests of both countries were involved in remedying this evil; for such a calamity as the present could not occur in Ireland without producing the most serious consequences in the Empire at large. The House could not exaggerate the effect of such a calamity, nor the extent of its results. In any other country it would have amounted to little short of a dissolution of society; and if that were not the case in Ireland, it was owing to the circumstance that his unfortunate countrymen had been broken, as it were, into suffering, and could go through greater privations than any other people; and in the next place—he cared not how much he might be mocked for saying so—because of the admirable discipline of mind

and soul which the Irish peasant had taught himself. He implored the House not to believe that anything which had been done as yet, great as appeared the amount spoken of, was applicable to the wants, to meet the terrible danger with which Ireland was threatened. He implored the House not to deceive themselves on that question, nor to think that the people of Ireland asked for those measures of relief as any boon or gratuitous benefit. The people might acknowledge the goodness of intention displayed towards them. They did acknowledge it; but they could not and would not admit that the great efforts to be made for their relief, or even greater exertions for the same object, were boons, favours, or allow they were anything else than the employment of some of that money of which Ireland had been unjustly deprived. He implored the House, at the present time, when Irish distress had made such an impression, and when they were about to alter and review their whole system of policy in all its branches; that they would also examine what had been their policy towards Ireland, and see whether they might not thus find the reason for much of the phenomena of the frequently recurring famines and perennial distress of that country. There surely must be something bad in the system and administration of affairs where such calamities were constant; and it was for the House, now that their attention had been thoroughly awakened to Irish matters by the present startling emergency, to think not only of temporary expedients, but to go to the roots of the evils of which he spoke. He was not now going into what might be called merely political matters, which it was desirous not to mix up with the present subject; but there were circumstances strictly relevant in the history of the international relations of the two countries which he should touch upon, but would do so very briefly. According to the statements of English writers and statesmen, up to fifty or sixty years ago, England stood charged with having systematically sacrificed the commercial interests of Ireland to what she conceived to be her own, and with having impeded the growth of her manufacturing enterprise and prosperity. On their testimony she stood charged with having denied to Ireland the use of her own resources. Let the House look to those matters, and see if there was not something of that policy remaining to the present day, and let them resolve to lay the axe to the root of the evil at once. The "hand to mouth" system would not do any longer. It would not answer to afford relief when some sudden emergency came upon Ireland, and when that had pased away, to forget. It was an unworthy system—unworthy of them, ruinous to the dependent country, and highly dangerous to the other. The authorities to whom he alluded were Mr. Pitt, who in 1785 and in 1799 charged them in the House of Commons—and was not contradicted—with having impeded the prosperity of Ireland. That charge was repeated by Mr. Huskisson in 1825, with the addition of a feature of Irish policy which they would do well to change. The right hon. Gentleman said—

> "State necessities" (the disasters in America in 1779) "acting under a sense of political danger, yielded without grace that which good sense and good feeling had before recommended in vain; and in 1782, under a like pressure, these concessions were made irrevocable."

Under the influence of the distresses of the American war you conceded some of the privileges which Ireland claimed; but since the concessions at the time of the Union no other concession was made to her. He must be pardoned for going into those old stories; but he was endeavouring to trace out the course of policy which had had such an effect on Ireland. In 1780 that injurious and cruel system by which they had impoverished the sister country was, for the first time, relaxed; but the right conceded to Ireland was merely, as he had before said, that of trading with the Colonies and foreign countries. No further concession was then made. The market of England was kept hermetically sealed against nearly all our valuable goods, while our manufacturers had the protection only of very moderate duties against English competition. In 1785, the notorious commercial propositions were brought forward nominally offering us the English market if we would consent to give up our independence of commercial arrangements with foreigners, and furthermore consent to fix Ireland with an annual specific tribute money in England. But even had Ireland consented, she would have gained nothing; for the higher rate of excise in England gave an excuse for supperadding countervailing duties against Irish goods coming in, in addition to the ordinary duties of import. The scheme failed. Ireland would not be deluded, and the propositions had to be abandoned. Notwithstanding our exclusion from the English market, still under the care of our own Parliament, our manufactures being se-

cure of their home market, began to flourish in a most extraordinary degree, and with, perhaps, a mistaken idea of further encouraging them, the Irish Parliament, finding it was in vain to seek to induce England to adopt a commercial system of mutual fairness and advantage, raised the duties on imports of English goods. To meet and crush this attempt, was brought forward—and, by what means it was not necessary nor fit he should now describe, was carried—the Legislative Union. Under the provisions of that Act, had they not impeded the resources and prosperity of Ireland? They had, of course, at once caused the duties on English goods to be lowered again, and then made a boast of allowing Ireland to retain for some twenty years more what remained of those duties. They left many protections to their own manufactures; but the duty left on Irish imports was low in amount, whilst the markets of England were shut against Irish exports. On account of the higher rates of excise in England, they had countervailing duties on Irish goods, which practically made the amount to be levied on the latter higher than that on English commodities in Irish ports. The operation of the Union revived once more the curse of absenteeism, which had been declining during the short period of independence enjoyed by the Irish Parliament. That drain increased enormously during the twenty years subsequent to the passing of that measure: the rich consumers began to leave the country in numbers, and her general condition proportionably declined. The Irish manufactures, thus deprived of their natural and best support, home capital and home customers, languished on till the expiration of the Union duties, and then fell to the ground, unable to stand the competition of the long-established and wealthy manufactures of England. At the present day it might be said that, with the exception of the struggling linen trade in Ulster, Ireland had no manufactures. It was impossible she could have any until the drain of absenteeism was stopped, and her rich proprietors returned to their homes. They had crushed Irish manufactures in consequence of the Union; and he said to them, if the people of Ireland had been driven to agriculture as their only means of employment, and if her large population overstocked that sole branch of industry, the condition to which they were reduced was owing to that Union which had deprived them of the benefit and profitable employment of manufactures. Whatever was to be done for Ireland, the House must interfere to stop the absentee drain of 4,500,000*l.* annually. He would implore the House, though that sum might appear paltry to speak of in a place where they were accustomed to dispose of such large amounts of money, to reflect that the whole rental of Ireland was but 13,000,000*l.*; and when they added to that the fact that her whole revenue was not more than 4,500,000*l.*, they would see the importance of the sum. He asked them in what condition would their country be, if she suffered from an annual drain equal to their entire revenue, and one-third of their whole rental; would they not have starvation in their streets, and misery in their fields? Could they wonder, then, that the same effects should be produced from similar causes in Ireland? He knew it was in the power of the Government to check that drain—at least by indirect means; but its evils were aggravated by others, which it was directly in the power of the Government to stop. There was 70,000*l.* a-year from the quit and Crown rents, and a large revenue paid on the foreign goods that came to Ireland through England, and on the English goods subject to English excise which were consumed in Ireland. It was the Irish consumers who paid those duties in both cases ultimately; and that being the case, why should not the revenue thus derived be duly credited to Ireland? It could easily be ascertained what the amount of the latter sum was, if a registration were made of the goods so transferred from one country to the other; but now there was no way of knowing the value of the commercial intercourse between England and Ireland, which in itself was a serious statistical defect. They ought to give credit to Ireland for the amount to which she was fully entitled in her contributions towards the revenue. When they spoke of making advances to Ireland (though they did not indulge in any boast on the subject, for he was bound to say nothing of that nature was visible in the speeches of hon. Members), and uttered public declarations as to the extent of their grants, had not his countrymen a right to say—"Look to the conduct of your country towards ours for centuries; see how you have prevented us making use of our resources, and interfered with our prosperity; and do not suppose that you now compensate us for all your past injuries." It might not be in their power to reverse the effects of the course

which had been hitherto pursued; but they could, at all events, prevent the absentee drain going out of the country. How could it be expected that the capital, which was said to be in Ireland, could be in a vigorous and healthy circulation, when there was an annual drain from the system to the extent of eight or nine millions, for which there was no return? It was with the body politic as with the body natural. It could not be expected that a vigorous or healthful action could take place, if the blood which ought to circulate through its members was continually drawn away. There had been much talk of those grants of money, and of the 468,000*l.* which they were to receive; but he said that those sums did not equal the amount of Irish revenue which went into the public coffers of England. What were the remedies to check that drain? An absentee tax was suggested. In Ireland they had a remedy of their own in a measure which they believed to include and comprise every remedy for the political and social evils of Ireland, and that was the restoration of their native Parliament. The Irish had been mocked at for demanding this, and a mongrel species of persecution had been carried on against its advocates. What could the Government and the House propose instead? Would they tax the absentees? Was it not monstrous that they should allow such a drain from a country whose population were exposed to the sufferings of starvation for nearly six months of the year? If they would not consent to grant them a Repeal of the Union, would they adopt the less natural but more forcible measure of taxing the absentees? It was in their power to do that, and they could by such a measure obtain a large rental, and at the same time cause the surplus of the contributions which Ireland made in abundant fulness to the revenue, to be spent in that country. If Ireland contributed her full proportion to the burdens of the State, why should she not enjoy a fair share of the State's expenditure? It was true that they had a share in the expenditure of the army and general military establishments; but why should they not have their proportion of the navy also? Why were their splendid harbours—the finest in the world, safe and capacious, easy of success to a friendly fleet, he would also add open to the foreign enemy—why were they left empty and unprotected? Why were there no guardships in her ports, and no dockyards along her coasts? If Ireland contributed to the national revenue, why should England absorb the whole expenditure? Those were matters which it was within the province of Government to control, and they could carry those ideas into effect to-morrow, if they chose. Those were practical tangible matters wherein improvement might be made, and they could not talk of giving Ireland a boon when Government was called on to grant her justice. There would be no public purpose left unanswered by acceding to those demands, for the service would be as well done there as in England, whilst Ireland would have the benefit of the expenditure. The reduction of Government offices and establishments in that country was a great evil to such a poor country. It was done under the pretence of economy of the public money; but taxes were seldom remitted in consequence, and where remitted, the benefit was spread over the three kingdoms, if Ireland were allowed a share at all; while the whole of the loss of the expenditure so saved to the public purse, was felt by her exclusively. As he had alluded to taxes, he would just state two facts to show that Ireland had been as unfairly treated with reference to them as on other points. He could prove that taxes had been remitted for the benefit of England alone; that, since the Union, taxes had been put on Ireland in the proportion of one to seven, and remitted in the proportion of one to eighteen; and that when grants were made to Ireland, the grants to England were out of all proportion, and those to Ireland were charged with a higher rate of interest—5 per cent., when, in Scotland and England, they bore either no interest, or 4 per cent. at the utmost, and generally only 3 per cent. He was ready to prove that these gifts and grants were only repayments of money obtained by England from Ireland; that the terms of the Union had been violated, and that Ireland had been subjected to an annual robbery. "You talk," said the hon. Member, "of our speeches at Conciliation Hall, and of our then coming here to supplicate for grants of money. I enter my protest now, and always will, against its being supposed that we ever asked for money: we never begged; we have demanded of you, and will again demand, our rights. I have pointed out these evils to you; it is not my fault if you will not believe them. While you are providing a remedy for temporary distress, I call upon you to correct perennial evils. We ascribe these evils to the whole course of your policy towards Ireland; do not blame us

and say we are wasting your time, if we take this opportunity of endeavouring to show it. If at any time the calamity of war should come upon you, you will prove more formidable to your foes if you have Ireland conciliated, and conciliated you cannot hope to have her, unless you do her justice in these respects as in all others."

Lord J. RUSSELL: I am far from complaining of the hon. and learned Member for taking this opportunity of speaking of what he considers to be the grievances of Ireland: so far from it, I could wish that the hon. and learned Gentleman would take every opportunity (whatever may be my opinion as to its fitness) of speaking in this House of anything which he may think a grievance in Ireland, and of stating in what respect he thinks the prosperity of Ireland may be improved. I am sure, and he has himself observed, that with regard to the present distress in Ireland, there is a disposition in this House to listen to any proposition that is calculated to relieve that distress; and I assure him that, whether in reference to the origin of grievances in former times, or whether in reference to the measures that may be taken to promote the good of Ireland, there will always be a disposition in this House to discuss the proposition fairly; and if we cannot find that other measures proposed are for the good of Ireland, I, for one, shall be ready to agree with him, if he can only show that his proposition is for the good of Ireland. I am very far from saying that a grant made to Ireland on the ground of her distress is to be regarded as a boon to Ireland. I consider this House, as representing the United Kingdom, is bound to consider every part of that kingdom; and if one part is more distressed, at any particular period, than another, it is the bounden duty of this House to attend to it, and there is no call upon that particular part to feel grateful to any other particular part. I own it appears to me that, so far, the measures of the Government have been judicious measures, avoiding the two evils, of neglect on the one hand, and that which is equally dangerous, the ostentatious display of relief on the other, which might have tended to augment the distress we are so anxious to relieve. This being my opinion, therefore, and thinking that the Government, having acted thus, will bring forward more extensive measures, if they should be necessary, in this confidence I recommend the hon. and learned Gentleman to withdraw his Motion; because, if, in his opinion, at any future time—a fortnight or a month—Government shall appear not to have acted with sufficient promptitude, or the measures shall appear to be not sufficiently large, he will always have an opportunity of renewing his Motion, and of suggesting another course more conducive to the end in view. I think the hon. and learned Gentleman has rendered a service to the House by the statements he has made as to the real condition of Ireland at this period; but I think it is desirable, pending the measures of the Government, that his Motion should be withdrawn.

Mr. O'CONNELL proposed to withdraw the Motion.

Mr. LAWSON wished to say a few words before the Motion was withdrawn. He wished to speak on the subject as an independent Member of the House, for he hoped he had established his perfect independence there. He was then without alliance or connexion with any leader in that House, and he desired to state his opinions in a few words. He did not, when he entered the House, contemplate making any observation upon the particular question which had been brought under the notice of the House by the hon. and learned Member for Cork; but after the statements which had been made by the hon. Member, and also by the hon. Member for Kilkenny, who succeeded him, he felt himself constrained to trouble them with a few observations, and perhaps he might be a little more loquacious than he had hitherto been, not only upon the question referred to, but also on the general question under the consideration of the House. He felt himself the more obliged to state his opinions, since they, on his side of the House, found that all the opinions of the leaders in whom they placed confidence had been overthrown; and he found that each one had to judge for himself. He should therefore state, very shortly, but very sincerely, the opinions he entertained with regard to Ireland. He thought, as regarded the question of famine that had been brought before them, there was no one on his side of the House who did not sincerely lament the sad position of Ireland, as it had been detailed by the hon. and learned Member for Cork—who, he thought, in the observations he had made, had displayed great good taste and feeling, as he had not interwoven with those observations much of political matter, except in so far as regarded the social welfare of Ireland. In following out as far as he was able the remarks of the hon. Member for Kilkenny, he should

endeavour to show, that, in many points, those observations were very pertinent to the question in general debate before the House. ["No, no," and "Order."] He was sorry, it being the first time for many years that he had had reason to offer any observations, that he had met with any interruption. He thought, in a question of such vast importance, it was quite competent for English Members to offer their sympathies with the sister country, and feel sincerely the sufferings of its population. Therefore, notwithstanding the interruption he had experienced, he should go on. The hon. Member opposite had said that the absence of the gentry from Ireland was one of the great sources of evil to that country. Now he thought it would be well for those who were hurrying on the question of Corn Law repeal, and the destruction of the agricultural interest in England, to consider whether the withdrawal of the gentry from England, and consequently the withdrawal of the available capital of the country, by the measures proposed by the right hon. Baronet, might not bring a similar calamity upon England. Another point to which he wished to refer, was a very significant one to the gentry and people of England generally. It was in reference to a drain of capital from this country for the purchase of foreign corn. If it happened that there should be a drain of gold from this country for the purpose he had mentioned, then the same calamity which the hon. Member opposite had so well depicted with regard to Ireland, might occur with regard to England also. This was a matter of the greatest importance. He then alluded to the potato crop, and said, if the people of Ireland suffered so much from the failure of an article of food, upon which they depended from year to year, and thereby were compelled to have recourse to others for the means of sustenance, the people of England should take a lesson, and be cautious before they placed themselves in the same precarious and uncertain situation of dependence from year to year, at the mercy of foreign nations, many of whom probably entertained hostile feelings, and others might not retain the same kindly and social feelings towards England which the people of England did towards the people of Ireland. He, therefore, hoped the people of England would consider, when they thought kindly of the people of Ireland, and sympathized with their distresses, that, if they wished still to continue that kindness, they must take care that they did not give their consent to measures which would produce nearly the same causes in England, and thereby deprive them of all possibility of extending their assistance to the people of Ireland. He remembered that, in 1822, he had the great satisfaction of subscribing wards a fund for what was then stated to be for the relief of the people of Ireland from a famine. Now he recollected, as regarded that subscription, and that calamity, that then the House saw no cause for the repeal of the Corn Laws. A temporary expedient met a calamity. At that time 300,000*l.* was subscribed in England; but what was the effect upon the people of Ireland? He believed that the distresses of Ireland at that time would have frightened the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty Government from his propriety, and would have induced him to come down to the House with some extravagant measure to meet the necessities of the occasion. But there then existed no fear of this sort, but 300,000*l.* was subscribed to purchase provisions, which were sent to Ireland. But what was the result. There was no money in Ireland to buy the provisions with. Well, then, might not a similar result occur in England if its population was made dependent upon others? It was of no use telling them they should have cheap corn, if they had not money to buy it. What was the step at last taken with regard to Ireland? It was found to be necessary that the money should be sent to Ireland to employ the people upon public works. After that was done, there was a surplus of 100,000*l.* which it was found impossible to employ in Ireland, and that was reserved to be applied to permanent works. He hoped, therefore, the House would pause before they gave their consent to any measure, such as that of the right hon. Baronet, which must have the effect of making England dependent upon others for the means of sustenance. He would say, in conclusion, that he should never be a party to any measure which would contribute to take away from Ireland that immense advantage which it possessed of affording an ample supply of grain, not only for this country but for itself also. That that country might long continue to enjoy prosperity was his sincere wish, and that, under an improved state of affairs, it might become and long continue to be a source of strength to the Empire at large.

Mr. O'CONNELL said that, after what had fallen from the right hon. Baronet (Sir

J. Graham), and the observations of the noble Lord the Member for London (Lord J. Russell), he would consent to withdraw his Motion, reserving to himself the exercise of his right to bring it forward hereafter, if he should deem it necessary.

Motion withdrawn.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE (SIXTH NIGHT).

On the Order of the Day for the resumption of the Adjourned Debate on the Corn Laws,

Lord J. MANNERS: I know, Sir, under what a disadvantage a Gentleman rises to take a part in this momentous discussion, who cannot enlist heartily under either the blue banner of my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire, or that of Her Majesty's Ministers and the hon. Member for Stockport; but who, regarding both as Englishmen, and both as really anxious to promote the best interests of the country, strives to the best of his ability to reconcile the contending forces, and to unite in one league of harmony and concord the conflicting elements of trade and agriculture. Knowing then that I cannot appeal to the excited feelings and animosities that prevail within as well as without these walls, and that my appeal must be to the calmer judgment of some less troublous time, I shall confine within the narrowest limits that which I have to say. Before entering into the main question, let me correct a misapprehension into which the noble Lord the Member for Lincolnshire fell the other night with respect to my hon. Friend the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: quoting an isolated passage from a speech of my hon. Friend's on the Corn Law of 1842, the noble Lord placed him in the category of Ministerial converts; but my hon. Friend's speech was altogether a free-trade speech, in which he accepted that amended Corn Law as only an "instalment of justice." Sir, I have been much struck, in approaching the consideration of the question, with the very general inclination on both sides of the House to view the problem how a country is to be supplied with food, as one exclusively of political economy. Now I entertain great doubts whether such a question should be so argued; and, without referring to those English political economists of whose opinions the House must be satiated, I will take leave to cite the language of one who in Italian literature occupies the same rank as Adam Smith occupies in English. Count Carli, the President of a Supreme Council of Public Economy at Milan towards the close of the last century, in a remarkable treatise on the Corn Law, expressly separates the question of supplying a country with food from the category of commerce; he says—

"The matter of corn is an affair of administration, and not of commerce, contrary to the other productions of the soil, such as wine, oil, &c.; because without these man can live, which is not the case with bread;"—

and after referring to a period when England suffered much from a constant deficiency of the home harvests, he says—

"In these circumstances, with that wisdom which is worthy of a people free and thoughtful, the Government set about considering whence they might animate internal agriculture, and step by step diminish the need of foreign corn, in proportion as they augmented the produce of their own soil. It is sufficient for me to observe, that the material of which we are treating is an affair of administration, and not of commerce, and that no prudent Government will renounce it, because neither are the seasons always equal, nor are men always heroic."

Well, then, I am justified on such authority in considering this question apart from the doctrines of political economy. I will own, Sir, without giving in my adhesion to that most melancholy theory of my noble Friend the Member for Liverpool—a theory which if carried into general practice, would place the charter of the poor man, the mitre of the prelate, and the crown of the monarch alike at the mercy of that most odious of all despotisms, the oligarchy of red tape—without acceding to that theory, I will own that when I heard nearly all the statesmen of the country had come to the conclusion that the Corn Laws should be abolished, I thought it was the duty of that great party who still believed protection to be essential to the welfare of the country, to carefully reconsider the whole subject, and, maturely weighing all the evidence that has of late years been submitted to the public, counting the cost of a protraction of the struggle, and estimating the chances of success—then, and then only, after that anxious deliberation, to come to a determinate resolution. For myself, being of opinion, on grounds with which I need not trouble the House, that the effects of a free trade in corn have been greatly exaggerated on the one side and on the other, I was prepared to consider carefully and favourably any proposition that might have been legitimately submitted to the country either by the noble Lord

the Member for London, or by the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury, that should have for its object the settlement of this long agitated question, and the extinction of those flames of civil discord which were then, and are now, so fiercely raging. But I was persuaded then, and am so now, that any such proposition, to be permanently successful, must be made not on narrow, temporary, evanescent, self-contradictory, and suspicious grounds, but on broad general principles; not hurried as the expedient of a terrified Cabinet, through a mystified Parliament, into a premature law, but submitted to that full and free discussion, and verdict of the English people, without which I am convinced no such mighty change can be beneficial now, or satisfactory hereafter. I can easily conceive such a course being adopted; and indeed, after the speech last night of the right hon. Gentleman, were it not for the indisputable evidence of eyes and ears to the contrary, I should deny the possibility of an adverse policy being attempted. How different, Sir, would be now the position of Her Majesty's advisers; what other and far better feelings would now prevail in the various counties of England, had the right hon. Baronet opened in the autumn of 1845 the ports, and on the meeting of Parliament announced that his convictions were changed; that, to use his own metaphor, he could no longer steer the vessel the same course; and that after those measures which the exigencies of the time required had been passed, he should appeal to the people to know whether they had faith in his wisdom, skill and integrity, and would sanction his new commercial and industrial policy! I have listened Sir, to all these long debates, in order to hear what reasons could be assigned by Her Majesty's servants for pursuing an opposite course; and the main plea of the right hon. Gentleman I take to be this: "Most people," said he, "agree that, following the example of foreign countries, and the precedents of our own Parliaments, we ought, being satisfied of the reality of the danger in Ireland, to have suspended, in the autumn of 1845, the laws regulating the importation of grain." Yes, Sir, I for one, agree with the right hon. Gentleman, the ports ought then to have been opened; but what can we, what can the country think of a Government who, not doing then what it affirms it ought to have done, turns round now to its old supporters, and calls on them to remedy its own laches, by adopting a course fatal, as they believe, to the best interests of their country? Nor, Sir, will it do for the right hon. Gentleman to say that the opposition he met with from his Cabinet was so strong, that he could not carry his proposal; for there is not, I venture to say, a man in England who believes that those Members of the Cabinet who, returning to power at the invitation of the right hon. Gentleman, acceded to this far greater revolution, would have offered any very resolute or determined resistance to the minor step of opening the ports, sanctioned as it had been in the interim by the Central Protection Society of England. "But if I had done so," says the right hon. Gentlemen, "the country party would have expected a guarantee from me that I would close the ports again, and that I was not prepared to give." Now, Sir, I have not heard any one Gentleman on this side of the House say he looked for any guarantee of the sort: on the contrary, the universal language has been, let that question be left to the decision of the country; and even now, late as it is, far later than if that much-derided Protection Government had been formed at Christmas, even now, if the right hon. Baronet is really in earnest—if he believes the danger to be so imminent, the necessity so pressing, and the remedy so easy—the shortest way would be, before the end of this week, with the assent of every Gentleman in this House, to suspend the Corn Laws, open the ports, and leave it to the good sense of the English people to decide whether they should be closed again, and this Corn Law, or any other, or none at all, be adopted. But if you persevere in your present lumbering course of action, let me ask how soon do you expect to pass your measures into law, without your Committee to inquire into the burdens on land, and, for aught I know, your Committees to inquire into the operation of free trade on the Colonies and on the finances of the Empire! No, Sir, if you believe present Irish distress is to be remedied by these measures, open the ports now, and leave your great schemes to the decision of another Parliament. I trust, Sir, I have shown how unfairly the right hon. Gentleman has urged that plea; and as in urging it he taunted needlessly many Gentlemen around me, I will take leave to assure him, that so far from expecting from him a guarantee to close the ports again, I don't believe there is a man, woman, or child in England who will, for the future, ask him to guarantee the Corn Laws, or anything else. No, Sir,

the right hon. Gentleman may rely on it, that those who think protection to native industry as inseparably connected with the welfare of the country as it is deeply rooted in the affections of the people, will depend for the future on the good sense, courage, and determination of the English people, not on the pledges or guarantees of statesmen and politicians. Throughout the speech of the right hon. Gentleman, I have to complain of the same want of candour and fair dealing with the arguments of his opponents. Now, it is extremely pleasant at the time, though I don't think much of it, afterwards to hear the way in which the right hon. Gentleman disposes of the particular course of action, or line of argument, his opponent may chance to adopt. Thus, last night, the right hon. Gentleman said, if the hon. Member for Bristol had proposed a vote of want of confidence in Ministers, or a declaration in favour of protection; or, if in short, he had done anything except that which he had done, then the right hon. Gentleman could have understood, and perhaps have been induced to support him; and Members are rather caught by that sort of reasoning. I was myself at first; but it is my firm conviction that whatever course the hon. Gentleman had adopted, he would have been met by a similar opposition from the right hon. Gentleman. But to return to the right hon. Gentleman's main line of argument. He is horrified that the hon. Member for Bristol proposes the question shall stand over for six months: "to stand still for six months in a country like this is to retrograde." We used to hear very different language not only from right hon. Conservatives, but even from that eminent champion of progress, the noble Lord the Member for the city of London. He used to tell us that the country could not stand a yearly revolution; but now the right hon. Gentleman's specific for all the evils of the country is a revolution every half year! Truly, Sir, after such a declaration from the First Minister, I think my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne, and others who think with him that there are still institutions and things worth fighting for left in England, are justified in withholding their confidence from so revolutionary a Government. Well, Sir, I now come to the right hon. Gentleman's estimate of the effect to be produced on foreign countries by this great commercial and industrial revolution. "Prussia," said he, "is shaken;" but no evidence has been submitted to us to show that Prussia is shaken: on the contrary, every public sign that Prussia has given is in the opposite direction; and I shall be very much surprised if Prussia, after the passing of these measures, does alter her present policy, for she will then have got all that she can ask or wish for from us, without making any equivalent to us. But passing from Prussia to France, the right hon. Gentleman said, that although the commercial aristocracy of France was opposed to free trade, yet intelligent public opinion was in favour of it. Let me ask, Sir, who are the leaders of this intelligent public opinion of France? I suspect Arago, and Thiers, and Berryer, and Louis Blanc, are the leaders of that public opinion; and so far from being advocates of free trade, they are strenuous maintainers of protection to French industry. I come now, Sir, to the main plea on which this Parliament is asked to consent to these sweeping changes—the failure of the Irish potato crop. Of that failure, and the probable results, more especially after the statements we have lately been listening to of the hon. and learned Member for the county of Cork, I wish to speak in deep sympathy; perhaps I cannot evince that sympathy better than by not needlessly parading it. But, Sir, I must be allowed to say that when the right hon. Gentleman argues from the failure of the Irish potato crop, in the autumn of 1845, to a total repeal of the Corn Laws in 1849, my reason is not so much convinced as my sympathy is affected. The right hon. Gentleman inaugurated with solemn and melancholy pomp the laying of that great corner-stone on which the new social edifice of free trade was to be raised; but the very first stroke of the argumentative trowel he applied to it, shivered that stone to pieces, and now it lies there a shapeless mass of jarring and self-contradictory atoms; for the right hon. Gentleman himself told us that he did not expect his measures would reduce the price of agricultural produce; and the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War, improving on that text, delivered a most eloquent homily to show that not only prices could not fall, but that there were no foreign provisions that could come in. Well, then, Sir, if this be so, how can present Irish distress be remedied by these measures? I say, therefore, that apart from the merits of free trade or protection, no case has been made out by Her Majesty's servants for proposing to this Parliament a total repeal of the Corn Laws; and I am

consequently justified in voting with my noble Friend the Member for Salop (Lord Clive) in favour of an appeal to the country; nor am I answered if told that I can appeal to my own constituents, for it is not an appeal to the electors of Newark alone that I seek for, but an appeal to all the constituencies of England. But now, Sir, let me say that I do not regard the proposal of the Minister as the best that could be made. I concur in many of the objections that have been urged against it. It is not a fair measure—it is not a free-trade measure—it is hardly a measure of free imports; it leaves on the one hand a 10 per cent. protection on manufactures; and a burden of 5,000,000*l.* in the shape of a Malt Tax, and a prohibition of the cultivation of tobacco, on the other. It is of course in vain for a person in my position to offer any opinion to the country on so great a question; but I am anxious to leave on record what that opinion is, and I think that a scheme which would admit the produce of our own Colonies and Indian corn duty free, and foreign grain at a moderate fixed duty, would place the corn trade on a basis satisfactory to the great mercantile interests of this country, would bind the various Members of our vast colonial empire by the closest ties of common interest to the mother country, and afford to the English farmer a fair security against the undue competition of his foreign competitor. Were this, Sir, my opinion alone, it would be worthless; but it is the opinion of many able and experienced men in the city of London and in Manchester; and I entreat the attention of the House to the following extract from the last circular of Messrs. Ferguson and Taylor, of Manchester:—

"We are not," say they, "insensible to the advantages of providing the benefit of cheap food for the population of these countries; and we think the safest means of doing this, is by affording every facility for developing the resources of our soil, and making its yield abundant by the encouragement of those engaged in its cultivation. A low fixed duty of about 5s. or 6s. would uphold British agriculture, whilst the protection would not be so great as to place the native corngrower beyond the risk of competion."

Non meus hic sermo : this is not the language of the Central Protection Society, nor of any of the old-fashioned supporters of the landed interest; it comes from those most deeply interested in the welfare of Manchester and English manufactures; and I say that opinions and authorities such as these cannot be pooh poohed away in a single sentence, or got rid of by a contemptuous sneer; and, with all respect for the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary it will not now do for him to say that a fixed duty cannot now be thought of because some time ago he said he never would vote for a revenue duty on corn. Entertaining, then, these opinions, not fearing free trade, and hoping that a future Parliament may sanction some such scheme as that I have presumed to sketch, I yet deprecate any rash and hasty interference with that system of protection under which trade and manufactures have risen to so marvellous a prosperity—under which agriculture has made such gigantic strides—and above all do I deprecate this House, at the dictation of the right hon. Baronet, so acting as to alienate from itself, and from those rulers whose edicts it seems prepared to register, the sympathies, the affections, and the confidence of that great rural population to which, in times of danger and distress, the Sovereigns of England have ever been wont to look—nor look in vain—for ready obedience to the laws, dauntless courage, and unswerving fidelity. For these reasons, while I neither fear nor hope much from a free trade in corn; while I am anxious to see a settlement of this great and long-agitated question—but in a manner satisfactory and honourable to all classes—I shall give a most hearty vote in favour of an appeal to the country; and oppose a resolute, though it may be an ineffectual, negative to the proposition that this House of Commons do resolve itself into a Committee for the purpose of considering the Corn Laws, with a view to their repeal.

Captain LAYARD observed, that whatever might be the opinion formed by some hon. Gentlemen on the other side of the House, concerning the great question proposed to their consideration by the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, looking upon it, as he did, as a question of vital importance—as a question by which the great principles of free trade were at once to be established; or, should the measure be rejected, for some time delayed (for he was one of those who never had the smallest doubt that free trade must ultimately succeed), it was his intention to give his warmest support to this great and beneficial measure; and he earnestly trusted that hon. Gentlemen would well and deeply consider the fearful responsibility that would attach to them if they any longer banded themselves together, and, under the cry of protection to native industry, tried to main-

tain a monopoly, which was nothing more nor less than a restriction on the food of the people. No cause that had ever been brought before Parliament had progressed so rapidly as that of free trade within the last few months. Those who had been the most skilful and strenuous defenders of monopoly had thrown down their arms, and said they could no longer defend so weak and hollow a cause; and what argument had the protectionists brought forward that had not been refuted over and over again? They had stated that a quantity of land would get out of cultivation; but let them remember the meeting at Goatacre, among the Wiltshire labourers, where the protectionists petitioned against protection, and where it was stated that when the labourer requested to be allowed to rent patches of ground, he was told by the farmer he must pay 8*l.* for that for which the farmer paid but 2*l.* For his part he believed that with such an increasing population—that with such an impetus as would be given to trade were this measure carried — that so far from any land going out of cultivation, in places where now there was only a wilderness and a game preserve, we should shortly see extensive and flourishing gardens. In every experiment made by the right hon. Baronet, approaching free trade, he had been eminently successful; and the last alteration in the Tariff had more than realized his most sanguine hopes. What was the use of experience? Were they to shut their eyes to it? Were they to be for ever blind? However that might be the case with some Gentlemen, he believed a far different feeling began to pervade the country, and he believed a better proof could not be adduced to support the truth of the assertion, than the wise, the judicious choice made the other day by the West Riding of Yorkshire; a choice, in his mind, equally honourable to the electors and the elected. What could be a more ample proof of the alteration which had come over the feelings of the people, than that a few years ago the noble Lord was beaten because he was not a sufficient protectionist, and now he stood in the proud position of their Representative as a free trader; or the course about to be taken by the noble Lords on the other side of the House? He alluded to the noble Lord (Viscount Sandon) the Member for Liverpool, and the noble Lord the Member for Newark. The first noble Lord made a speech in favour of protection, which was claimed, and justly so, by the hon. Baronet the Member for Oxford. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War had also put in his claim; but, in his opinion, it was about as just a one as the American claim to Oregon, and seemed to show that right hon. Gentleman to be of a very avaricious disposition, as the noble Lord had, in the division he had made of himself, given his old friends (the Government) what they, no doubt, considered upon this occasion the better half—namely, his vote. Now, the line thus pursued by the noble Lord put him in mind of a circumstance that happened a few years ago. A person at Huntingdon having given a vote to a successful candidate, the Member, from those pure motives of gratitude which actuated so many politicians, procured for the man the place of chorister at Canterbury. But when he was required to perform the duties, he was found to have no voice at all. Some one, patronised by the genius of poetry, though in a very inferior degree to the hon. Member for Pomfret, put the story into rhyme, and it ran thus:—

> "A singing man and cannot sing!
> No need to thank your patron's bounty:"
> "Excuse me, sir, if I can't sing,
> My voice is in another county."

So it was with the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool, who had made a right good speech for protection, as far as was possible in such a cause; but his voice, like the chorister's, was in a different direction. Then the noble Lord the Member for Newark wrote a letter to his constituents, and said, if ever he was returned again, he would not vote in favour of protection. What the noble Lord would now do it was impossible to say. He defied any Member who had listened to the noble Lord's speech to say what the noble Lord's actual views on the question now were. He could not help thinking it would have been just as well if the two noble Lords had paired off and said nothing at all on the matter. When he heard the right hon. Gentleman, then Secretary at War, state in his free-trade speech—which he congratulated him upon—when he said in that speech that the Corn Law of 1815 was, in his mind, a great mistake, he agreed with him in that opinion; nay, for his part, he went further, and not only thought it a great mistake, but a great crime. By that mistake or crime, whichever they chose to call it, commerce had been crippled, agriculture had been injured, crime and misery had increased. It had given rise to difference of feeling greatly to be deplored. But like other crimes, it had

brought its own punishment. It had for years kept the agriculturists in hot water and uncertainty; and at last received its just retribution and condemnation by the very hand that millions had been spent to raise in its defence. They were told by the protectionists, that it was by this law that great and glorious England had taken her stand as one of the greatest nations of the earth. But what a fallacy! He would give them an illustration. He supposed no one, either in the House or out of it, would doubt for a moment that the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government was a free trader. Now, did any one suppose for a moment, that because the right hon. Gentleman had lived with the protectionist party, had spoken with them, and had acted with them, that that was the reason he was a free trader? Certainly not. These had been his hindrances—in spite of all these he was a free trader, from honest and sincere conviction. And who could doubt that he would have been a free trader long ago, if it had not been for these unhappy connexions? So it was with England. It was not on account of these Corn Laws she had become great and glorious, but in spite of them; and she would no doubt have arrived at a higher pitch of grandeur if she had not suffered from the ill effects of these baneful laws. He could not help expressing his surprise (though certainly there were times when a wise man ought to be surprised at nothing), though on the last occasion that he (Captain Layard) had the honour of addressing the House upon this subject, he had foretold that the hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, and the present Secretary for the Colonies (Mr. Gladstone) would become ere long free traders. He was delighted to find that his prediction had been correct, though at that time he was not sanguine enough to hope that the change would have been made so quickly and completely. But he congratulated them on having acted in a manner worthy of the high station in which their talents had placed them. They had been undismayed by the thunders of the Caucasus, unscared by the virulent attack of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury; though, indeed, they were manifestly guilty of the charge brought against them by that Gentleman—the charge of sacrificing that which was supposed to be the benefit of their party, to the welfare and happiness of their country. They had been told by the hon. Members for Shrewsbury and Newcastle-under-Lyme, that rotten potatoes had given rise to rotten argument—that the fear of scarcity had been exaggerated; but the deplorable accounts received from Ireland, unhappily, too surely proved that the prudent measures taken by the Government were only those which were absolutely necessary; and he, for one, believed most men would agree with him in thinking that those who prepared for a scarcity acted more wisely, ay, and more conscientiously, than those who, with the fact staring them in the face, of the fearful loss which had happened to the potato crop, endeavoured to argue that no scarcity need be feared at all. In that able pamphlet entitled "An Attempt to estimate the Effect of Protecting Duties on the Profits of Agriculture," by Mr. Morton and Mr. Trimmer, it was proved to demonstration that the tenant-farmer and the agricultural labourer were considerable losers by this so-called "protection." By that pamphlet the truth was proved of the declaration of the hon. Member for Stockport, Mr. Cobden, that the system of protecting duties was a system of mutual plunder between the growers of the different descriptions of agricultural produce. He would have been delighted had the right hon. Baronet proposed to do away at once with all duty upon the importation of corn, because he believed the only real danger attending the agriculturists was the uncertainty with which they had to contend at present, and which must continue for the ensuing three years—an uncertainty which prevented that self-reliance, that outlay of capital and industry, which could alone raise them to that independence which they ought to aspire to, but which was unattainable as long as they relied on artificial prices and a bolstering system. He, for one, had the greatest reliance on the ability and judgment of the noble Lord the Member for London; that reliance was, if possible, increased when the noble Lord made the assertion, which to him seemed so wise, but to many so startling, that protection was the bane of agriculture. For his part, he looked on this measure as a great and beneficial one—one not only advantageous to this country, but which set a bright example to the world at large, and an example worthy of all imitation. He would vote for this measure, believing that it would prove one great link to assist in binding together the nations of the earth in unity and peace.

Mr. R. PALMER rose for the purpose of expressing the opinions of the constituency he had the honour to represent, and with whom he entirely concurred on this

question. His constituents were awaiting with the most intense anxiety the result of their deliberations, believing that upon it would depend either their future prosperity or permanent distress. It was, however, unnecessary for him to state the feeling of the public on this subject; since a number of meetings had been held in various parts of the country since these measures had been announced, and, almost without exception, they had been unanimous in condemning the measure. Persons connected with the agricultural interest had never calculated that the right hon. Baronet, so long the advocate of protection, would, almost at a moment's notice, have turned round and advocated a precisely contrary course. He thought they were justified in that opinion by the speeches the right hon. Baronet had delivered in that House. He was not going to quote *Hansard* at any length, yet he thought he should be justified in referring to a speech delivered by the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) in 1844, on a Motion by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers). The right hon. Baronet then said—

"I think the agriculture of this country is entitled to protection, and that it is so entitled to protection from considerations of justice as well as policy. I do consider that there are special and peculiar burdens on agriculture. I do believe that that portion of the Act which imposes burdens for the relief of the poor, and subjects the profits of trade to those burdens, as well as the profits of agriculture, has not, so far as the profits on trade are concerned, been acted on, whilst it has been acted on with respect to the profits on agriculture. I say, on that ground, that I think there are special burdens applicable to agriculture. I think also that there are restrictions on the application of capital as concerns agriculture. I think, therefore, that considerations of justice do entitle agriculture to protection. I think that considerations of policy, so far as the general interest of all classes is concerned, justify this protection."

And the right hon. Baronet concluded his speech on that occasion by saying—

"I repeat the declaration I made at the commencement of the Session on the part of the Government, that we do not intend, and have not intended, to diminish the protection which the existing Corn Laws give to agriculture."

It was on a statement of this kind that the country had placed reliance; and nothing could have caused more surprise than the recent change of opinions avowed by the right hon. Baronet. He had been present at several meetings in the county he represented, and he must say he never saw such unanimity of feeling in his life. Neither was it confined to the cultivators of the land; for many respectable tradesmen he had conversed with were all convinced of the alarming consequences which would ensue from these measures. The question was universally asked in the country, what grounds are there for these great changes? He had listened with the greatest possible attention to the greater part of the debate, and especially to the eloquent speech of the right hon. Gentleman last evening; but he had not heard any one substantial reason—nor, indeed, was there any reason brought prominently forward, either by the right hon. Baronet or the Secretary for the Home Department, or the Secretary at War, except the failure of the potato crop in Ireland. Now, he heard with great regret the statements made on this subject last night by the right hon. Baronet. But the question which naturally arose on hearing them was this—whether the measure the right hon. Baronet now proposed could by possibility remedy that particular evil? He could perfectly understand, that if the right hon. Baronet had proposed to open the ports for a time, it might be the means of giving greater facilities for the purchase of food to relieve a starving population; but it did not appear to him that opening the ports, whether temporarily or permanently, could have any effect, unless the unfortunate individuals who were the subjects of that calamity had the wherewithal to purchase corn? The right hon. Baronet said that he had proposed to the Cabinet to open the ports at once, but that they rejected that suggestion. Now, he, for one, did not think that in such a measure there would have been much difficulty. He thought the right hon. Baronet might have taken upon himself the responsibility of suspending the law, and opening the ports for a time: for he, for one, after hearing the statements of the right hon. Baronet respecting the distress in consequence of the failure of the potato crop, would never, for a moment, have objected to any Bill of Indemnity which it might have been necessary to bring in in consequence of such a measure. He did not believe that any persons, however they might advocate the existing law, would oppose any Government which considered it absolutely necessary, for the security of any part of Her Majesty's subjects, that such a temporary suspension of the law should be adopted. But the right hon. Baronet argued that, in his opinion, it was impossible to open the ports as a temporary measure, without involving the reconsideration and repeal of the Corn Law itself. He was not sufficiently versed in

political affairs to say whether that was a correct opinion or not; but he did not see that the one was at all the necessary consequence of the other. The right hon. Baronet alluded last night to several occasions on which the Corn Law had been temporarily suspended by Orders in Council. He recollected also that in August, 1827, Mr. Canning obtained an Order in Council for the admission of 500,000 quarters of corn, in consequence of the rise in price occasioned by a deficient harvest. No doubt, in so doing, Mr. Canning did right; and he recollected that a Bill of Indemnity was passed in the next Parliament. But Mr. Canning, having done this, never thought of coming to that House and saying the Corn Law itself must be abandoned. Nor could he see, at the present moment, any good reason why, if the temporary suspension of the law had been again adopted to meet this temporary difficulty, the law might not again have come into operation. It would require no Act of Parliament to bring back the law into operation; for it would come into operation of its own accord when the necessity for its suspension had ceased. A great deal had been said as to protection, not alone to agriculture, but also to all other products of native industry; but he should confine himself to the protection afforded to agriculture. That had been abandoned by Her Majesty's Government, who stated that they had good reasons for changing their mind on the subject, though they had not adduced any satisfactory reason to him for its abandonment. Protection to agriculture was, however, no new part of the political wisdom of this country; it had been the policy of England for centuries. In Lord Campbell's "Lives of the Chancellors," reference was made to it in the first year of the reign of Henry VII.; when the Lord Chancellor of the day, Morton, the ancestor of a noble Lord connected with the Anti-Corn-Law League, addressing Parliament, which was then the practice, instead of a Speech from the Throne as at present, cautioned the people of this country against allowing British gold to be sent out of the country for the purchase of foreign produce. That was the earliest instance of protection he had seen recorded; but he believed that it had existed from a period still earlier in the history of this country. The hon. Member for Sheffield had quoted Mr. Huskisson on a former evening in support of free trade in corn; but he remembered that right hon. Gentleman's speech on the silk trade, in which the principle of free trade was enunciated, as well as another speech in which a contrary principle was maintained on the subject of corn. And whatever Mr. Huskisson's opinions might be on other points, one thing was clear, if his own words were to be trusted—namely, that he was in favour of protection to agriculture. These were the words of Mr. Huskisson on that subject :—

> "Let bread," he said, "be the produce of your own soil. I care not how cheap it is; it is cheap now; and the cheaper it is the better. But let us have a sufficiency of our own growth for our own purposes, as far as possible. And, in order that we may ensure the continuance of that cheapness and sufficiency, we must ensure to the home grower that protection which has contributed to produce them."

That was high authority; and he (Mr. Palmer) fully concurred in the views of that right hon. Gentleman, because he had never seen any reason to suppose them erroneous. The noble Lord the Member for London had held equally strong language in favour of protection in former days. The noble Lord had since changed his mind on that point; but he only wished to show how the principle of protection had been at all times maintained by men of the greatest ability in that House; and that, therefore, those who clung to it still had, at least, high authority for so doing. A good deal had also been said on the subject of compensation to the landed interest. He (Mr. Palmer) had never contemplated compensation; and in his opinion, it was not an argument which ought to be put forward in a debate upon the principle of protection. The principle of protection was either right or wrong: if it was right, it ought to be maintained at every hazard; if it was, on the contrary, wrong, and unjust, and unfair, then those who enjoyed it had no right to ask for compensation on its removal. But as the right hon. Baronet had alluded to it in his speech, or, more properly speaking, as he had referred to the equivalent advantages which his proposition would confer upon the agriculturist, as a counterbalance to the removal of protection, he could only say that, as far as he was able to collect them, the opinions of all those whom he had consulted on the subject, or conversed with, were opposed to the plans of the right hon. Baronet, which they considered in the light of so much waste paper, and as forming no equivalent whatever for the direct loss they would sustain. The right hon. Baronet had stated that the effects of the former alterations made by

him in the Corn Law and in the Tariff of duty on provisions, had been productive of no injury, but, on the contrary, had been productive of great benefit to all parties; and the right hon. Baronet had instanced the great rise that had taken place in the prices of cattle, of meat, and of other commodities, as a proof of that position, notwithstanding the anticipations of many to the contrary. The hon. Member for Somerset, however, had stated many reasons why that rise in prices should have occurred, and therefore he should not touch on that part of the subject; but he certainly did think that the right hon. Baronet could not take credit for that rise on the ground of removing protection, because when the right hon. Baronet had introduced the Tariff, he stated it to be for the express purpose of reducing prices. The alterations, therefore, made by the right hon. Gentleman would appear to have been of no great advantage to the farmer or to the consumer. But, even admitting that the facts were as the right hon. Baronet inferred, and that the circumstances had actually occurred which he took credit for, did not that furnish an exceedingly good and sufficient argument for leaving things alone, and not meddling with them any further? He believed that the constant meddling with the Corn Law had caused more difficulty and distress to the agricultural party than any badness of seasons or other circumstance whatever. After the alterations of 1842, the farmer had just now begun to recover strength; he was getting remunerating prices for his produce; the labourers were better paid; and a general prosperity commenced to prevail in the country. But the right hon. Baronet, by the proposition he had made, had done much to turn the scale the other way, and reverse the balance. The effect of the agitation which had succeeded upon the question raised by his proposition, was a complete stagnation in the market for agricultural produce. No miller bought now, except for present purposes, as it were "from hand to mouth." No business had been done in the market of the county which he represented, the market of Reading, since the period of the proposition of the right hon. Baronet; and though prices, perhaps, were quoted as high as on any previous occasion, and though it might be, also, that a few parcels of very good wheat were sold at these prices, still there was no actual dealing, no actual sales, in the great majority of instances. That stagnation was a most material disadvantage to the farmer, especially at this time of the year; and it created a difficulty in making up his rent, fully equal to a difference of 7*s.* or 8*s.* a quarter in the price of his produce. The time, as well as the circumstances, were each most unfortunate for the farmer in regard to the plan of the right hon. Baronet. It had been said by the noble Lord, whose sentiments had been quoted by the last speaker on the subject, that protection was the bane of agriculture; but he (Mr Palmer) would put it to any person acquainted with the face of the country during the last twenty years, whether a more scientific system of cultivation did not now prevail in all places; whether more capital was not employed upon land; and whether the produce was not much greater now than at that period? Yet all this had occurred under what the noble Lord had termed "the bane of agriculture"—a system of protection. He (Mr. Palmer) believed protection not to be the bane of agriculture, but the contrary; for it was his opinion that the farmers were induced to lay out their capital upon the land on the strength of the home market being ensured to them, a consequence of protection—an argument which had been often used in that House; and he liked it none the worse for being old, although old arguments as well as old principles were now going fast out of fashion—that argument was, that protection to British agriculture was given with the view to make this country independent, as far as it could possibly be made, of the foreign supply. This argument had been supported with great ability in that House upon several occasions by various hon. Members, but by no hon. Member with greater ability than by the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary. These were the sentiments of the right hon. Baronet expressed upon that occasion:—

"It appeared to him that for a State of the power and the magnitude of Great Britain, deliberately and voluntarily to place itself in a state of dependence on foreign Powers for its daily food, was the most foolish thing that could be imagined. It was like placing the country in a state of siege—all the supplies were to be drawn from without, and if they were stopped there would be a state of dearth which would lead to absolute desperation, and there would be this destruction if our supplies could be cut off by any foreign Power. If we placed ourselves in that position, there were enemies so jealous of us, that they would readily cut off the supplies, and reduce us to the greatest extremity; and when he heard such a proposition pressed, he could but consider it most dangerous and most unwise. After all, it was not in the power of any human legislation to prevent occa-

sionally a deficient harvest. Neither was it possible for any legislation to prevent a deficient harvest from being a national calamity."

That was the opinion of the right hon. Baronet in 1839; and the opinions of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government were analogous, as expressed on the same occasion. In that debate the right hon. Baronet spoke as follows:—

"Now, if you are right in maintaining that the shores of the Baltic will afford our chief supply, and if in reliance on that supply we diminish materially the production of corn at home, the misfortune of a generally deficient harvest may involve us in the greatest peril. In ordinary seasons we may safely trust to a regular supply from abroad, and the discouragement of home production may not be seriously felt; but if the common calamity should arrive (and Mr. Tooke and the highest authorities show that it ought to be foreseen), then we may have cause bitterly to repent our loss of independence, and to find that the encouragement we gave to home production, by restrictive duties, was a provident insurance against the dangers of famine."

These were no small authorities in support of that view of the case; and he should leave them to the House to weigh at their leisure. A good deal had been said in the course of the debate about the question under discussion being a labourers' question and a landlords' question. The strongest proof, however, that it was not altogether a landlords' question was furnished by the manner in which it had been taken up by the tenant-farmers at the meetings which had taken place in all parts of the country. Go where one would, very few of the landlords were to be found at these meetings; they were all, or mostly all, composed of tenant-farmers. The tenant-farmers felt that their interests were materially involved in the question at issue, and therefore they displayed unwonted activity. The landlord was, in most cases, an opulent man, to whom it was not perhaps important if his rental was reduced some 20 or 25 per cent.; but the tenant-farmer had invested all his capital in his farm; every thing he had in the world was at stake; and consequently he felt himself to be in a very different position. And when people said that the landlord had but to reduce the rent to place the tenant in a safe position, they spoke without a knowledge of the real facts of the case in question, as regarded the farmer. Rent, in point of fact, was by no means the heaviest charge upon the land of the tenant. Ten shillings a quarter difference in the price of corn would not make more than half the difference in the amount of rent. An intelligent tenant-farmer had informed him, that if wheat was reduced 10*s.* below an average of 54*s.*, it would make to him half the difference of the rent he paid his landlord; and he had argued, therefore, that the question was one of vital importance to him. If the price of corn was low, because of the largeness of the produce, no man could reasonably complain; but when the remunerative price of that article was beaten down still lower by foreign competition, then indeed he considered that the farmer had a good right to complain of the system which led to such ruinous results. With respect to the question being a labourers' question, it was a common observation, that it was to the advantage of the labourer to have bread as cheap as possible. That sounded well, no doubt, and it was true in fact, so far as fixed incomes were concerned. To the man with a fixed income it was most desirable that bread and meat, and every other article of consumption, should be obtained at as cheap a rate as possible; but that rule did not apply to the daily labourer, who had to subsist upon the wages he earned from day to day. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, had both come to the conclusion that the wages of labour were not dependent upon the prices of provisions; and he did not deny that to a certain extent they were right; that the price of wages and the price of provisions did not rise and fall like alternate buckets in a well. He said, however, that in the agricultural districts the price of corn was the basis on which wages were founded. When there was a considerable addition to the price of corn, there was always a rise in wages, and when there was a great fall in the price of corn, wages, in like manner, fell. When farmers were unable to get good prices, and when matters went unfavourably for them, he had always found that the labourers were the worst off. He recollected when corn was much lower than at present—in 1822, and again in 1835, which was a remarkably low year—that there was the greatest distress among the labouring classes, because the farmers were unable to obtain remunerating prices for their produce. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department did not always entertain the same opinion on this subject which he now professed. He did not find fault with him for the change; but he wished to quote the opinion expressed by the right hon. Gentleman in 1839 on this question. At that time, in addressing, he presumed, the ad-

vocates of a repeal of the Corn Laws, the right hon. Baronet said—

"If they desired a low price of corn, let them declare their intention, and he would tell them that their object was to reduce the rate of wages; for low wages would certainly be the result of the low price of corn."

That was the right hon. Baronet's opinion in 1839, on this subject, and, as it would appear, in direct opposition to the sentiments which the right hon. Baronet appeared now to entertain. He was aware that the whole subject had been so long, so ably, and so successfully debated, that he had to apologize for trespassing on the attention of the House at such length. He was not one of those who would cast blame or throw any imputation on any man or set of gentlemen who, on a great political question, should find it necessary to change their opinions; but when he saw a statesman like the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, who was certainly no novice in the conduct of public affairs, and who must have made such subjects the study of his life—when he saw a Gentleman of such ability and experience throw overboard all his former arguments, and abandon all his former principles—when he heard him admit that all his former views, founded on some experience, were erroneous—and when he heard the complimentary language which he used towards the heads of the party that went by the name of the Anti-Corn-Law League—when he recollected all this, however he might admire the boldness of the Minister, it was not surprising if his confidence in him as a statesman was very materially shaken. For his own part, entertaining a strong opinion on the expediency of protection, not alone to agriculture, but also to other branches of native industry, and seeing no sufficient reasons for the contemplated change, the right hon. Baronet would excuse him if he declined following him into the path through which he would wish to lead them. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War told them the other night that this was a fine opportunity for the display of their honour and disinterestedness; but he for one could not see how he was to maintain his honour at the expense of his political honesty. He had never given any pledge, and had never been asked for one, but still he thought there was an implied agreement between him and his constituents that he would endeavour to maintain the protection for which he had hitherto struggled; and, therefore, so long as he had the honour of having a seat in that House, it should never be said that he had betrayed the trust that had been reposed in him, or the interests that had been committed to his charge.

Sir C. NAPIER had hoped that after the able, brilliant, heart-stirring, and unanswerable speech of the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury, the hon. Members opposite would have allowed the debate to come to a conclusion that evening. He feared, however, from what had fallen from the noble Lord the Member for Newark, that if it was still the intention of hon. Members to proceed with that debate, they would no doubt, follow out the same course of invective in which they had hitherto indulged against the right hon. Baronet, in the vain hope of inducing the right hon. Baronet to alter his mind, and adopt another course. He was glad that the hon. Gentleman who had last addressed the House, had not spoken in the same bitter tone of feeling as the other hon. Members who had spoken on the same side. The great complaint that hon. Gentlemen had made against the right hon. Baronet was, that he had proposed a new Corn Law in consequence of the state of the potato crop in Ireland, and the depression and distress which were soon to follow it. But he did not see why the right hon. Baronet was to be blamed alone. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Home Department had changed his mind as well as the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War had followed in their wake; and he believed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was of the same opinion as the right hon. Baronets. The rest of the Cabinet had also followed the right hon. Baronet in adopting the just and popular view which he had taken. Why, then, was the censure of hon. Gentlemen reserved for the right hon. Baronet? He wondered that they had not blamed hon. Gentlemen on the Opposition side of the House, who, having formerly been advocates for a fixed duty, now agreed in opinion with the noble Lord the Member for London, and thought that the time was come for a total repeal of the Corn Laws. He was surprised that this change had called forth no expressions of astonishment or indignation from those hon. Gentlemen who ploughed with the same horses which they had yoked together twenty or thirty years ago. Had not the right hon. Baronet told the House over and over again, that on the 1st of November he proposed

to his Colleagues to open the ports, and that he was only supported by three of his Colleagues? The right hon. Baronet, seeing that his Colleagues would not agree with him, gave his resignation into Her Majesty's hands. The noble Lord the Member for London then attempted to form an Administration, but failed in the attempt; and he (Sir C. Napier) for one rejoiced that the noble Lord did fail, because when he saw the numbers who had deserted the standard of the right hon. Baronet, he could not but think that the hostile array presented on the other side of the House, would have been much more formidable than it was now likely to prove. The noble Lord the Member for Newark had asked why the right hon. Baronet did not now open the ports? The noble Lord blamed the right hon. Baronet for not opening the ports, because in November he had expressed his opinion of the necessity for opening them; but he (Sir Charles Napier) believed that if the right hon. Baronet had proposed to open them now, hon. Members opposite would have opposed the project just as much as they did the present measure. He thought that the right hon. Baronet was perfectly correct when he wished to open them. Hon. Members opposite now told the right hon. Baronet that they would much rather have an immediate repeal of the Corn Laws than a repeal at the end of three years; but he (Sir C. Napier) was not going to fall into that trap. He believed that the right hon. Baronet had gone just as far as he could go. Hon. Gentlemen opposite hoped, by inducing the right hon. Baronet to agree to this alteration, that the measure would be defeated in the House of Lords; but he trusted that it was a settled thing on that (the Opposition) side of the House, that they would not take the bait which hon. Gentlemen were so ready to offer them. The noble Lord the Member for Newark had said that there ought to be an appeal to the country on this question. But was this the time, when Ireland was in a state of starvation—and hon. Gentlemen must know that Ireland was in a state of starvation when they did not contradict what the right hon. Baronet said on the subject—to make matters still worse than they were by an appeal to the country? The noble Lord was the most extraordinary man whom he had ever heard speak on this subject. He changed his arguments constantly. The noble Lord, who had always, he believed, been a sliding-scale nobleman was now ready, it seemed, to accept a fixed duty. The noble Lord had changed his mind, just as the right hon. Baronet had changed his, with this difference, however, that the right hon. Baronet changed his because he was convinced that he had been wrong; while the noble Lord changed his in order to keep up his rents. ["Oh, oh!"] Hon. Gentlemen opposite did not like to hear the truth; but he would tell them very plainly what his opinion was on the subject, namely, that if they did not think their rents would fall in consequence of the measure, there would be no opposition to it. ["No, No."] He knew that plain speaking was not in fashion in that House; but he must remind hon. Members that when interest swayed the human heart the mental vision was not always perfectly clear. The right hon. Baronet had adverted to what had fallen from the hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien), in relating a conversation which bad taken place between the hon. Member and his good friend the tenant-farmer. Now he (Sir C. Napier) would take the liberty of giving a little advice to the hon. Members opposite. He would recommend them, instead of making long speeches, to grant long leases to their tenants, and then they would gain much more than they would get by protracting this debate. Let them go to Scotland, and see how the land was farmed there. That country had an adverse climate, three weeks behind that of England, yet let Members look at the manner in which turnips were cultivated—let them look at the mode in which wheat was drilled, and the crops were thrashed out by machinery, instead of employing men and horses. If they would imitate the example of Scotland, England would become an exporting instead of an importing country. "It may seem, Sir," said the hon. and gallant Officer, "very ridiculous in a sailor like me to give advice to hon. Gentlemen opposite, on the subject of agriculture; but I myself am a farmer. True, I am not a farmer of very long standing, having only been a farmer four years. Four years ago I took a farm of forty acres. [*Laughter.*] Hon. Gentlemen may laugh, but what is good for forty acres, is good for four hundred. I took, I say, a farm of forty acres, and I wish I could have afforded to have taken more land. The land was very bad; what is called in Hampshire 'forest land,' which had been under the plough fourteen or fifteen years. The land was very foul, and those who had it before me used to plough it with four horses, and two or three men conducting them. As might be expected, they lost

money by farming it. One man gave it up; another took it; no one could do anything with it, and they all went away ruined. I hope I am not fatiguing the House. I began farming much in the same way as my predecessors had done, and the consequence was that in the first year I lost 200*l*. Sir, I began to think this was very bad farming. I looked about me, and I saw a poor man, a neighbour of mine, who had a piece of land of ten acres, who had always good crops, and who contrived to keep his land dry. I went to him and said, 'Well, old boy, how is it that you, who have no capital at all, you, who have only a little pony, your wife, and yourself, manage to have such good crops as you do?' In reply to my question he said, 'If you will follow my advice you will have good crops too. Cleanse your ditches, level your banks, and drain your land well.' I acted under his directions in managing my land; and the next year, in place of four or five quarters of oats, which was the utmost which the land had ever borne before, I had eleven quarters of oats to the acre. I went on under his advice; and now, instead of the land belonging to me lying fallow during the winter, as is the case with nearly all my neighbours, all my land, with the exception of three acres, has crops upon it. If hon. Gentlemen will do the same as I have done, they will, I doubt not, succeed equally well. Mr. Speaker," continued the hon. and gallant Member, "I have taken up arguments different from those used by others, because the question before the House was so completely worn out, that I thought it necessary to get up something fresh, and to enlighten the agricultural mind."

Mr. SHAW said, that unaffectedly, if he were to consult only his own feelings, he would much rather have taken no part in that debate. In every view that he could regard the subject to which it related, and the circumstances under which it had been brought forward, they were painful and repulsive—they brought personal friendships and party predilections into direct collision with public duty, and left him but the alternative of perfect silence, or a condemnation of those men, whom, for the sixteen years that he had then been in public life, he had followed and esteemed. The conviction, however, that not only the measure itself, but, above all, the means by which it was about to be carried, would more injuriously affect Ireland than any part of the United Kingdom—as well as the peculiar course the debate had taken, constrained him to trespass for a short time upon the attention of the House. The hon. and gallant Member (Sir C. Napier) would excuse him for not thinking it necessary to attempt an answer to the gallant Officer's speech. With few exceptions, the discussion had been kept up on that side of the House, between the former supporters of the Government and the Members of the Government, aided by the select number of independent men who, "few and far between"—had risen to say they would vote for the Government, while generally they had made their speeches against them. Amongst those, indeed, throughout the whole debate, there had been no speech with the reasoning of which he more entirely concurred, than that of his noble Friend the Member for Liverpool. His noble Friend described the course taken by the Government as unwise, impolitic, and unjust; and the reasons which they had adduced to sustain their sudden change of opinion as inconclusive and unsatisfactory; and although his noble Friend expressed a strong hope, in which he cordially joined, that if the measure did pass, it would disappoint both the hopes and the fears that were then entertained respecting it—yet his noble friend regarded it as a most perilous and uncalled-for experiment. He only regretted that his noble Friend and he had come to different conclusions with respect to their votes. And when the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) alluded to Lord Ashley and those other hon. Members who had resigned their seats, rather than repudiate their implied engagements to their constituents, the right hon. Baronet had no right to claim them as approving of the course he (Sir R. Peel) had taken; but, like his noble Friend (Lord Sandon), they probably considered that when the leader of the Conservative party had taken that course, and proposed a sweeping measure of free trade, that that was entirely a new element in the question—that it rendered the result inevitable—and that a protracted contest would be injurious to all parties. That, more or less, every thinking man must admit. But, with all the esteem which he sincerely entertained for his noble Friend and those honourable men, he felt it to be the duty of every independent Member of that House to oppose what he thought wrong, and support what was in itself right, irrespective of the acts of others, and of consequences for which he could not fairly be held responsible. True it was that they must

reckon on defeat; but was that surprising? A comparatively little band suddenly separated from what had been a powerful and commanding body in that House. The noble Lord (Lord Morpeth) taunted them that they were without leaders or a head. Yes, their leaders had not only abandoned them, but gone over to the enemy. They were necessarily in some amazement and confusion—without concert, ill-arranged and unorganized, undisciplined, unofficered; but yet undismayed—and believing the cause in which they had enlisted to be just, they at least would not be deserters from it. But whether victory or defeat awaited them, they were resolved, with God's help, to be true and faithful to the end. The subject of the potato failure, on which the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had laid such peculiar stress, had been already that night debated on a separate Motion by the hon. and learned Gentleman (Mr. O'Connell). He (Mr. Shaw) on that occasion had stated his opinion, that although there would be in Ireland a considerable aggravation of the usual periodical distress at the close of the present season, still that he thought very exaggerated statements had been put forth, and undue alarm excited on the subject. His desire was to be most guarded and cautious on a question involving the vital interests of the suffering poor in Ireland. But, while he would not for a moment check the sympathies of the House, nor discourage the efforts of the Government, he could not avoid deprecating exaggeration of the evil. He had taken great pains, and had considerable opportunity of making personal inquiries on the subject. He had communicated with contractors for large establishments, such as gaols and workhouses, and had watched the state of the market since the panic had ceased; he had visited and made personal inquiries during the autumn and winter in the counties of Cork, Tipperary, Carlow, Wicklow, besides the county of Dublin, in which he resided; he had held correspondence with various other parts of Ireland; and the result he came to was, that although there had been in the digging out season a general apprehension of failure, that that had since been greatly allayed, and that there was at present, in most parts of Ireland, the reasonable expectation of a fair average crop. In some parts he feared it would be very deficient, and that the evil had been increased by a waste of the potato, and a glutting of the market under the influence of an early panic. He should also observe that there was, that year, a more than ordinary supply of grain and other food in Ireland, as a substitute for the potato, and he trusted, likewise, better means of purchasing food, from a more more than ordinary employment of labour. He was, however, far from blaming the Government; on the contrary, he commended them for taking active means for averting the possible calamity of famine, and would gladly support every measure for employing the labouring population, and alleviating the sufferings of the destitute poor in Ireland. What he deprecated was, the attempt to turn the potato failure in Ireland to a purpose which neither the facts of the case nor sound reason could justify. But, assuming that the potato failure had been as general and entire as some persons had represented, could that for one moment be seriously urged as a sufficient reason for the sudden change of the Government on the subject of the Corn Laws? Were they to be told that a man of the ability, the knowledge, the information, and practical mind of his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government (Sir Robert Peel), could, for thirty years of public life, have recommended and advocated the system of protection as applicable to all the varied wants and circumstances of that great country, without taking into calculation the liability to partial failures, deficient crops, and bad seasons, to an extent far beyond what it could for one moment be contended the potato failure could affect the present controversy? It was only within the last few days that he had heard the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham), in answer to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Sharman Crawford), when proposing outdoor relief under the Poor Law in Ireland as a remedy for the potato failure, ridicule the notion that a temporary emergency should be met by altering the principle of an established system. With reference to the diminution of the committals for crime during the last three years, quoted by the right hon. Baronet, he, or any one acquainted with criminal statistics, could have told the right hon. Baronet that such was always the case when the demand for labour and the employment of the poor increased; and he thought the stimulus given in that respect by the railway works of the last three years had been rather unfairly kept back by the Government speakers. He was not there to deny that there was not only much that was plausible, but much abstract truth in the principles of free trade, and the maxims of political economy. They

were not, at that side of the House, so ignorant as their opponents affected to think of the writings of Adam Smith, of Malthus, M'Culloch, Ricardo, and other eminent men of that class; they had read them, but they also knew a little more; and that while those doctrines might be very sound as regarded a new country, or if you could persuade all the nations of the earth to act with the reciprocity and simplicity of a single community, ruled by one authority, yet that when you came to apply them to such a country as England, you could only do so having a full consideration of her artificial condition, the national debt, and consequent heavy taxation, under which she laboured, as well as all the peculiar circumstances and complicated interests upon which essentially depended the welfare, prosperity, and happiness of that mighty Empire.

"A thousand years scarce serve to form a State,
An hour may lay it in the dust."

From whom had they so frequently and profitably learned these lessons of practical wisdom as from those very men who would now have them untaught them all? The speech of the right hon. Baronet (Sir Robert Peel) on the previous night, had been, from first to last, an absolute free-trade speech, unqualified by any one of the doctrines of caution or practical experience of which he had not only been the disciple but the teacher for the last thirty years; the new convert had almost surpassed the old professors, and the right hon. Baronet's whole argument was a *petitio principii*, in regard to that which was the real gist of the question in dispute—namely, whether the theories of the free-trade philosophy were to be applied in their full latitudinarianism, or cautiously adopted with the careful discrimination and matured wisdom which the existing circumstances of an ancient and highly artificial country suggested. The onus lay upon the right hon. Baronet to convince those whose opinions had been formed under his own teaching for the last thirty years, that he (Sir R. Peel) had been wrong all the rest of his life, and was only right since the 1st of last November; and that, either by the proof of altered facts or circumstances, not temporary emergencies—or by a new course of reasoning, not by the trite truisms borrowed from the school of the more consistent free traders, nor plagiarisms from the speeches of hon. Gentlemen opposite, or the Anti-Corn-Law Leaguers—all which had been a thousand times explained or refuted by the right hon. Baronet himself. His vocabulary or powers of reasoning could add nothing to those able arguments and eloquent statements made at former times by the right hon. Baronet and the Members of the present Government, with all the force of sincerity and truth; and it would be nauseous to the House and the country were he to attempt to reproduce them then, when, night after night, the process was going on of the words in which they had been spoken being eaten at that very table, where, and by the very men by whom, they had so recently been uttered. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department (Sir J. Graham) had tried to gulp all his at one swallow. But that was too much even for the stomach of the right hon. Baronet, and it quite overcame the nerves and gravity of the House. No, it would not do for the right hon. Baronet now to talk of "abrogating his inheritance," rather than wring his wealth from the poverty of the poor man. Was that, then, what the right hon. Baronet had been doing for the last thirty years of his life? That assumption was really the begging of the whole question. Did the right hon. Baronet think that even the poor rustic labourer was so simple as to be taken by that appeal, recollecting who it was that, as it were only the other day, so poetically described—

"The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,"

as compared with "the sad sound of the factory bell"—and drew the pathetic contrast between "the blooming garden and the foul garret"—the "innocent walk of the country Sabbath, and the debauchery, the sorrows, and the sins of the crowded manufactory;" who spoke of "sinking hearts and rebelling hands;" and asked, "where were the moralists that they did not lift their voices against those fearful consequences?" Ay, but where was the moralist now, when the right hon. Baronet was himself proposing to perpetrate a cruelty which he then described as "far more atrocious than sending the Poles to Siberia?" and declaring that that very system would make this "the last country he would wish to inhabit," which he now said was to render it prosperous, peaceful, and contented? Depend upon it, this sudden change in six months from the opinions of a whole life would much more affect the public character of the men than the soundness of their former opinions; and, unless that change could be supported by facts and reasoning very different from any that had been adduced in the present debate, their former opinions and arguments would remain un-

touched, and bear all the impress of their intrinsic worth. But, passing from the six months' converts to those whose conversion appeared, as far as the public was informed, to have been brought about in not many more than six days, he came to what did appear to him the most inexplicable, what certainly had been the wholly unexplained part of the entire case; he meant the conduct of those Colleagues of the right hon. Baronet who had resigned their offices and raised the first alarm throughout the country because they disapproved of his proposed measure; and yet in not a great many days resumed their offices again for the purpose of supporting those same measures. It was no answer to say, that they were all honourable and upright men, who could not be influenced by dishonest or corrupt motives; he had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with most of them, and he could say with the most unaffected sincerity that he knew all that to be true: there was one of them whom the whole civilized world knew to be incapable of trickery or double dealing. But that was not enough: as public men, the public had a right to demand a public explanation of them. It was not for this country only, but that the conduct of their Government might be intelligible to all other countries. It was not for the present time so much as for history. It had been justly observed by Lord Mansfield, if he rightly recollected, or some other eminent man, that the worst precedents had often been established from the best motives, and that when a sound principle was departed from, in order to meet the exigencies of a particular case, that which was in itself well intentioned, and in the particular instance just, could easily be turned by designing men, and from bad motives, to the purposes of injustice. The right hon. Baronet seemed to think that the personal conduct of the Members of the Government was a matter of little moment; but he protested against that doctrine; and while he did not attribute to the Members of the Cabinet the slightest taint of personal corruption or dishonesty of motive, yet if their conduct continued unexplained, he believed that the discriminating public of that and other countries would consider that it evinced an infirmity of mind—an instability of purpose—a political tergiversation—a species of Cabinet juggle unprecedented in the annals of English statesmen. Would their powerful neighbour, France, fail to draw the striking contrast between the eminent man the First Minister of the Crown in that country, by his firmness and consistency strengthening their Government, and consolidating their power—and ours, weakening and dissolving both by the exhibition of the very opposite qualities? Was that a moment that America, however you might attempt to bribe her to peace by a repeal of the Corn Laws, should see the public men of England wanting in that true English spirit which refused to succumb to blustering and clamour? He was persuaded the Members of the Government were all men of personal courage, who would not hesitate to risk their lives in the discharge of their duty; but he maintained that they would be handed down to posterity as the greatest political cowards that ever wielded the destinies of that great country. The right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) not only seemed to speak with all the incautious zeal of a political apostate, but to be ready to act with all the desperation of a political coward. He made it the substance of his speech—the very point of his peroration. He did not see how it could bear any other construction than that the right hon. Baronet, for the sake of peace and good order, discarded that great party which had always been the friends of order—which comprised an immense proportion of the rank, the property, and, let what would be said to the contrary, the intelligence of the country---and who at all events inherited the principles as well as the blood of those who for centuries had been distinguished as the supporters of good order, the laws, and the Constitution. And, forsooth, to prevent revolution, anarchy, and ruin, the right hon. Baronet (Sir James Graham) would throw himself and the Government bodily into the hands of the Anti-Corn-Law League in England, and of the Repeal Association of Ireland! He had been much struck the other day by the speech of a tenant-farmer, he believed in Northamptonshire, who told the anecdote of a manufacturer's remark to him, "Why you farmers are fools; why don't you agitate and annoy the present Government, for that is the only way of obtaining anything from them?" The lesson had not been lost in Ireland; he observed that an hon. Friend of his, and one for whom he had much personal regard, widely as he differed from him in politics, (he meant Mr. Smith O'Brien), had hailed the present concession as an harbinger of a Repeal of the Union; and his hon. Friend was an enthusiastic and earnest man, who would not fail to profit by it; and he himself protested he should not be so much astonished,

if, in two years hence, he found his right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) under the pressure of sufficient agitation, and in deference to popular clamour in Ireland, proposing some modified plan of a Repeal of the Union, as he would have been two years ago, had any one then predicted that he (Sir R. Peel) would, at the present time, have proposed the measure that the House was then discussing. As regarded Ireland, the measure would, in a twofold point of view, be unfavourable to the Union: first, it would take from the friends of that measure the argument of the great advantage Ireland derived from the certain demand of the English market for her agricultural produce, almost her sole staple commodity; and her imports of corn to Great Britain were yearly and rapidly increasing. Next, it would furnish to the repealers the strongest inducement to persevere, seeing, that while protection was abolished, and all bounties taken from other trades, a great encouragement and a monster bounty was offered to the trade of agitation. And when the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had last night used a threat to the agricultural interest, which he thought was not very worthy of the right hon. Baronet, nor could much alarm them—that if annoyed he would not be very unwilling to yield the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws—surely that was but a further proof of the instability of mind of the right hon. Baronet, as a public man, and of his besetting infirmity to adopt the counsel of his opponents, and to yield that to pressure and to clamour which he refused to reason and to justice. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), in concluding his speech the other night, spoke of the "glory" to be reaped by the present Government, and the solid satisfaction by the noble Lord and his party from their coalition for the carrying of the measure then before the House. When he heard the noble Lord apply the term "glory" to the present Government as their share, he could not but think that the noble Lord was speaking bitter irony. If glory at all, it must be the glory of martyrdom. For let success or failure be the result, let that measure bring weal or wo to the great interests of the country, surely glory, or honour, or credit, could never attach to the means by which the present Government would have carried it. No; the noble Lord, and men of all parties, in and out of the House, well knew that the conduct of the Government in that regard would have given a shock to public feeling, which would vibrate through every portion of the Queen's Empire, and shake throughout the world all public confidence in their public men. But that the noble Lord and Gentlemen opposite, as party men—and he was one of those who thought that the country must be governed by parties—he did not wonder that they as party men should feel great satisfaction. It was only natural. They saw on his side of the House their ranks broken—their strength scattered; his right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) having committed suicide on his own party with the very weapon by which he had formerly overthrown the noble Lord and his party: the man who, at the head of an united and overpowering phalanx of that House, had triumphantly driven the noble Lord from his position, now supplicating the noble Lord to spare the existence of his Government—["No, no."] Well, if they objected to that expression, he would correct it—then, at all events, existing as a Government upon the sufferance of the noble Lord; a Government obviously *in extremis*; Cabinet Ministers, without seats in Parliament, offices vacant, and which could not be conveniently filled up. For whether the popularity of the Government was tested by appeals to a Conservative or free-trade constituency—to an agricultural or metropolitan district—failure was equally likely to be the result. For his part, he said—and he said it in the sincerity of his heart—that when he recalled what the party led by the right hon. Baronet was three years ago, and what it had become, he was sorry his political life had lasted until he saw that day, and was impelled by an imperative sense of duty to renounce the leadership of the man with whom he had been associated throughout his (Mr. Shaw's) political life, whom, however, he trusted, he could still be permitted to call his right hon. Friend. Mistaken, and greatly mistaken, as he thought his right hon. Friend, he was satisfied that his right hon. Friend was influenced by a sense of what he deemed his public duty. He claimed for himself the same just construction of his motives, in opposing the measures of his right hon. Friend; and it was very painful to him (Mr. Shaw) personally. He would conclude by addressing to his right hon. Friend on his own behalf, and that of those who felt with him, the words which not very long before, and on a similar occasion, his right hon. Friend had addressed to the noble Lord oppo-

site, the Member for London: "While you invite us to follow you, you present to us only distracted councils, conflicting Colleagues, statements of facts not to be reconciled, and arguments leading to opposite conclusions. We then peremptorily refuse to surrender our judgment to your guidance, and to throw the protection secured to agriculture, under the existing law, into the lottery of legislation, in the vain hope that we might by chance draw the prize of a better."

Mr. BRIGHT said, that he had hoped when the hon. Member for Bristol moved his Amendment, that they were to have the question of protection discussed; that when the right hon. Baronet moved that proposition which had been so often and so ably brought forward by his hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, they were to have the whole question fairly gone into, as being that about which the country really cared; for he would assure hon. Gentlemen opposite, that they never committed a greater mistake than in imagining that the great body of the people cared one farthing about the quarrel in the great Conservative party. He had been an attentive listener during the debate, and had endeavoured to find out any reasons which might be alleged in favour of agricultural protection. The hon. Member for the University of Dublin would forgive him if he did not attempt any answer to his arguments; as, if he was not mistaken, this was a discussion on the merits of protection, and on these merits the hon. Gentleman had said not one syllable. He passed, then, to the speeches of those Members who had at all grappled with the question. The hon. Member for Bristol said, that the farmers of England would not consent to sell cheap corn, and buy dear sugar; and the hon. Member for Lincolnshire had stated that the Colonies of England had been protected at a heavy expense to the English farmer. From this he gathered it to be the opinion of hon. Gentlemen opposite, that it was not fair to give protection to the colonial sugar grower if protection were withdrawn from the British grower of corn. He admitted it most freely. If this great inroad were to be made upon protection, the principle must be extended to all —manufacturers, agriculturists, and colonists. If, then, it were unfair to protect sugar and not corn, it must be clear that if there were any industry to which the Government did not now afford protection, that the protection which it extended to agriculture must be unjust to the class pursuing the unprotected branch of trade. He supposed they would not deny that. Well, he was then, in some sense, the representative of one of the largest trades carried on in this country; a trade to which no Gentleman on the opposite side had ever proposed to extend the protection of legislative enactments. Since he had entered the House a proposition had been made to remove restrictions on the export of machinery—much of it used in the trade referred to. Every hon. Member connected with that trade had voted for it. Last year it was proposed to sweep away the protective duty of 10 per cent. from cotton yarn. Every hon. Member connected with the trade voted for the proposition. And there was now not a person in any way interested in the business, who did not regret that the right hon. Baronet had not swept away every vestige of protection. But he would not talk of the cotton and woollen trades—he would come to that great branch of industry of which hon. Members opposite talked so much, and appeared to know so little. He had passed by the door of the Central Office of the Protection Society the other day, and certainly the place did look what was generally called "seedy," and very forlorn. There was not the least appearance of business; but he observed a handsome brass plate on the door, marked "Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture and Native Industry." Now, what was this native industry that they were so anxious to protect? Did they recollect that in 1842 his hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden), proposed that before they proceeded to make a law to raise the price of bread, that it was becoming to ascertain whether it was possible to make a law to raise the rate of wages? What, on that occasion, was their answer? That spinners and weavers did not understand political economy—that it had long ago been settled that wages could not be raised by Act of Parliament. They had said so, and within an hour of the declaration they proceeded to make a law for the express purpose of raising the price of the wheat which they had to sell—the produce of their own estates. They would impose prohibition, and raise the value of the article to a certain pitch. They did not mind the starving of an operative in Lancashire, or a labourer in Wiltshire. To a certain point they seemed determined to carry prohibition. The population was increasing—the competition for food increasing, and, therefore, they

hoped, as they said, that there would be an increase of profits to their farmers—a hope which the public was ill-natured enough to translate into a hearty aspiration for an increase of rents to themselves. But now, where was this protection to the labourer? He had heard a clergyman of the Church of England say that the protection of the labourer was the Poor Law. But it was as much the protection of the landlord. If the latter became poor he would betake himself to the Union. But what protection had the labourer akin to the protection which the Corn Laws gave the landowner? That House, within the memory of the oldest of those who now sat in it, had passed no law for the purpose of giving employment to the labourer, or raising the rate of his wages. The hon. Member, the senior Member, he believed, for Wiltshire (Mr. Benett), at a meeting held the other day in his county, made a long speech to the farmers. He reviewed the condition of the agriculturists in this happy land; and concluded by stating that, had he to come into the world again—had his life to be lived over again—he knew no condition which he would choose with so much contentment —with such pleasure—as the humble lot of an agricultural labourer. He (Mr. Bright) really felt some delicacy in saying anything which could imply a doubt of the sincerity of the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman was older than himself, he had lived among agricultural labourers all his days, and he ought to know something of their condition. However, after all, he would take the opinion of the agricultural labourers themselves upon the point, rather than that of the hon. Member, landowner in Wiltshire though he was. Now, it happened that there was a meeting of peasantry, at which the matter was debated the other night, at Goatacre. He was aware that some hon. Members had stated that that meeting was got up by the League. And he must say that the omnipresence of the League had been so impressed upon hon. Gentlemen, that if he stated that the League had nothing to do with the Goatacre meeting, he believed that some of them would go away with the impression that, nevertheless, it had. But there had been a second meeting at a place called Bremhill, at which the chair was taken by a labourer named Job Gringell. He knew not whether this poor fellow was a pattern labourer of Wiltshire; but he told his auditory, "I be protected, and I be starving." And it was not in Wiltshire alone that such scenes were passing. Since he had come into the House a paper had been put into his hand, drawn up by a most respectable person at Tiverton, and containing accounts of the circumstances of twenty-eight families—the number of each family, and the wages earned by its members. And how much did these wages amount to? Why 7*s.* a week. These men —with wives, and five, and six, and seven children each—lived in miserable huts, and earned 7*s.* a week. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire said that the labourers there had 12*s.* a week. He asked him whether it was protection that had given the labourer in Wiltshire 7*s.* a week, and whether the peasant there had protection commensurate with that which Parliament had accorded to the owners of the soil? The hon. Member for Northampton was very pathetic on the subject of the coachmakers, who, he contended, were to be thrown out of employment by the change in the Tariff; but if the hon. Member would go to Southampton, and interrogate Mr. Andrews, the coachbuilder there, he would be told that at this moment he was constructing carriages to go to almost every part of Europe. Why, he would not insult his countrymen as some hon. gentlemen did. He would not believe that they were so inferior in skill and enterprise that they could be beaten on all hands—the man of taste by the Frenchman — the English farmer by the serf of Poland. But hon. Members persisted in expressing great horror at the consequences of the repeal of the Corn Laws. They were continually talking of an inundation of wheat. Now, we had different sorts of inundations. There were actual inundations of water—there were talked-of inundations of wheat; but it was the remark of a wise and acute writer on the subject, that rivers of wheat were as rare as rivers of gold. No country produced more corn than was necessary for its own wants, and there was nothing in the circumstances of any foreign nation which would make it a formidable rival in agriculture to this country. They drew from every acre in England a larger quantity of corn than was grown on a corresponding space in any country in the world. There could be no doubt of the fact, and as little of another fact, that of the produce of the land the English labourer got less for his share than fell to the lot of the actual tiller of the soil in any other country whatever. Why, if their prices were so much higher, as they said

they were, and the wages they gave but 7*s.* a week, and if each of their acres grew nearly twice as much as any other acre in the world, how could any conclusion be come to other than that the labourers of England received a smaller share of the produce of their toil than the peasantry of any country in the world. Then look to the advantages by which the landowners were assisted. They possessed more manure, they could hire better and cheaper agricultural labour, they had superior implements, they had better roads, and markets more valuable beyond comparison, and yet they complained of not being able to get on. It was protection which had damaged them—they had protected their farmers into a state of decrepitude; and now, when a stimulus was to be applied, they trembled for the consequences. How did matters at present stand? Take the county of Chester. There they found a high aristocracy and a poor tenantry—land of fair quality most wretchedly cultivated—in fact all the elements for the production of a mass of pauperism as great as that in the southern and western counties, had it not been for the proximity of Lancashire. It was not that the people of Cheshire were inferior to their Lancashire neighbours; but that an unfortunate system of legislation had destroyed the vitality of agriculture. An hon. Member complained of the burden of poor rates on the land. He contended that the tenant-farmers paid no poor rate whatever according to the scale which the hon. Gentleman would lay down, and that their capital was wholly exempt from local taxation. Those opposite complained that he did not pay poor rate on the machinery in his mill, and on his stock in trade. Well, they could not wish to mete out another measure to the manufacturers from that which they applied to themselves. Let them see how this plan of taxation would work. The hon. Member might have a tenant who had some thousands wherewith to cultivate his land; that tenant paid no poor rate on his household furniture, on his stock, or his growing crops, or his cattle, or his horses. Not a farthing poor rate did he pay on all these things until a permanent improvement in the land rendered him liable. Was that true or not? Now if he (Mr. Bright) was obliged to pay on his machinery, it was quite clear the tenant farmers must pay on their stock. Such a system would never be found practicable, and as it would work infinitely greater injustice than service, he advised the hon. Member for Berkshire to say nothing more about it. [Mr. PALMER: I only quoted Sir Robert Peel's speech on that topic.] Yes, but you used the right hon. Gentleman's argument as unanswerable at the present time. There was another burden on land about which they heard nothing in that debate, and that was the burden of game. Two sons of the Duke of Rutland had spoken in that debate, and were about to vote against the proposition of Government. Now in 1844 that noble Duke paid 915*l.* for damage done by game on 389 acres of land. Now he asked hon. Gentlemen how they could sanction a law which prevented a foreign supply of food being furnished to a starving people, and at the same time destroy quantities of food solely for their own gratification? I believe, in reality (said the hon. Gentleman), you are not afraid of a repeal of the Corn Laws. You are angry with the Government, but you are not afraid of protection being abolished. In this House and out of it you have said repeatedly, "that if the Corn Laws were abolished the land would be neglected, and no rent paid by the tenants (an assurance some of you will be reminded of before twelve months elapse)—the labourer would starve, the national debt not be paid—that there would be no revenue—that a proud aristocracy would be lowered—that the Church, and therefore Christianity, would be endangered—that the Crown itself would be insecure—and that the sun of England, whatever that means, would set for ever." This is a short list of the calamities that were to come upon the country. Now do you adhere to the statement, or are you anxious to repudiate it? Why, you exhibit no alarm, you show no resistance. You say that seven-ninths of the population are connected with agriculture, and nearly all are in favour of protection; and yet, though all the calamities I have enumerated have been predicted by you, their leaders and guides, there is not the smallest prospect of insurrection; and the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department assures us, that for the last twelve months not even the sound of sedition has been heard within the precincts of the Home Office. But you don't believe that any such dread calamities are at hand. Where, if you do, are your public meetings? There was a meeting in Dorsetshire of 1,500 persons. I myself addressed 3,000 in that county, and presented their petition for total abolition. But where else have you held meetings? Did you see the

Lancashire petition with 300,000 signatures? Did you see the petitions presented by the Metropolitan Members, signed by 400,000? and hon. Gentlemen opposite coming down with their 150 petitions, with twelve or eighteen signatures to each? Where is public opinion in your favour? Look to the public press. All the newspapers which have the widest circulation are, almost without exception, in favour of the Government proposal. We have all heard of men going merrily to battle with a chance of losing their heads, or gaining that glory which they look on as a sufficient reward for every peril. We have even heard of some reckless and daring criminals who joked upon the scaffold; but never could we imagine men sliding into the unfathomable abyss of ruin with faces so jovial and complacent as those of the hon. protectionists opposite. You say the right hon. Baronet is a traitor. It would ill become me to attempt his defence after the speech which he delivered last night—a speech, I will venture to say, more powerful and more to be admired than any speech which has been delivered within the memory of any man in this House. I watched the right hon. Baronet as he went home last night, and, for the first time, I envied him his feelings. That speech has circulated by scores of thousands throughout the kingdom and throughout the world; and wherever a man is to be found who loves justice, and wherever there is a labourer whom you have trampled under foot, that speech will bring joy to the heart of the one, and hope to the breast of the other. You chose the right hon. Baronet — why? Because he was the ablest man of your party. You always said so, and you will not deny it now. Why was he the ablest? Because he had great experience, profound attainments, and an honest regard for the good of the country. You placed him in office. When a man is in office he is not the same man as when in opposition. The present generation, or posterity, does not deal as mildly with men in Government as with those in Opposition. There are such things as the responsibilities of office. Look at the population of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and ask yourselves whether, with all your valour, and although you talk of raising the standard of protection, and crying, "Down with the Anti-Corn-Law League," there are men in your ranks —and I defy them—who will take that bench (the Treasury) pledged to a maintenance of this law. The right hon. Baronet took the only honourable course. He resigned. He told you by that act, "I can't any longer do what you want—I can't defend your cause." The right hon. Baronet, no longer your Minister, came back the Minister of the Sovereign and of the people, and not the advocate of a class who placed him at their head for their own special and private objects. Why, the right hon. Gentleman has not used you badly. He offered no obstruction to your taking office. The right hon. Gentleman stated distinctly that he had not advised the Sovereign to send for Lord John Russell, but that he left it to the Sovereign to use Her own discretion as to the party to be selected for Her Minister. It would be presumptuous in me to assume what were the considerations that swayed the decision of the Sovereign; but I doubt not there entered into Her mind the question, "Shall I select for office men pledged to uphold the present Corn Laws?" and if she had done so, she would thereby do that which would jeopardize the aristocracy, and do a thousand times more damage to your institutions than the instantaneous sweeping away of every vestage of the system of protection. Why, what sort of Government would you have made? There is a *programme* of your Administration printed this morning in the *Times*. There is the hon. Member for Somersetshire at the Board of Trade. I don't say that all the mills of Lancashire would shut up at the announcement, but irrepressible laughter or the utmost consternation must have spread in all the trading districts. Lord Stanley was to have been a leading man in your Government. Now, recollect the noble Lord's geography as to a Russian province. The hon. Member for Norfolk, who sits at the Table, challenged my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport to a discussion, at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, and, in the courtly language of the Central Society, he predicted there would be a "shindy." Well, the hon. Gentleman told the assembly that certain resolutions were advocated by Henry Clay, once President of the United States. Well, if one Member of your Cabinet does not learn better geography, and another more correct history, I am afraid your rule over the destinies of this Empire will not be very brilliant. You were, too, to have the Duke of Richmond. That noble Duke said, last week, that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport got thirty thousand pounds a week by his

business, and that one of his own tenants paid a larger amount of poor rates than all the Leaguers put together. That may be true; but if it is it speaks badly for protection, when one tenant of its greatest advocate is obliged to pay so much to the poor rate of his parish. But what sort of Government would Lord Stanley, the hon. Member for Norfolk, and the Duke of Richmond have formed? I am quite sure of one thing, that in all my public speaking, of which so much has been said elsewhere, I never did anything so disastrous to the aristocracy, and especially to the order of Dukes, as the noble Duke of Richmond has done for the last four months. Yes; for exaggerated statements, for charges against men from whom he differed, for such statements as he is said to have made last night, "that it would be easy to send itinerant agitators into the manufacturing districts to show that cotton would burn as well as stacks." And yet for men capable of such things, you profess yourselves anxious to remove the statesmen who now occupy the Treasury benches! You know the country would not tolerate such a Government a week. I do not believe that even you are anxious to place the protectionists in office; but you wish to be avenged on those who have forsaken the obligations of party, in order to obey the call of a great country, imploring them to work out its commercial deliverance. I was going to make an observation to the Member for Oxford, if he had not left the House: I fear the hon. Baronet has forsaken his usual associates in politics, the bishops. ["Oh!"] I understand all the bishops are to vote with the Government; if this be true, the orthodoxy of the hon. Baronet will at least be doubted. Why, would any Gentleman dare to say that when there is the intensest suffering in your counties, and when famine is at hand in Ireland, one dignitary of a Christian church would dare to give a vote for preventing the opening of the ports and allowing a supply of food to a starving people? Though the hon. Baronet may not truly convey on this occasion the sentiments of the bench of bishops, he is certainly the fitting representative of that Oxford which, from its celebrated decree in 1683 down to the present time, has done more than any other city to prove that there may be the greatest possible acquaintance with books, united to the profoundest ignorance of men. Now, as to the measure before the House, I hesitate not to say that it is a great measure, and does great credit to the Government. But great measures, like great pictures, are sometimes tarnished by defects; and I believe it is a serious defect in this measure, that it does not propose an immediate abolition. I know that the tenant-farmers in many districts prefer immediate to gradual repeal. I ask it, not only because there is no alarm in this country, and men are giving higher prices for their farms, but on this ground, that we have always advocated the repeal of the Corn Laws, because they were unjust, in defiance of the laws of God, and an odious abuse of the laws of man. If the emergency has been so great as to justify the Government in going so far, it pronounces their condemnation if they stop where they are. If there be suffering throughout England, and a pending famine in Ireland (and no man is insane enough to deny it), the Government can never defend the duty of from 4*s.* to 10*s.* for three years on the importation of food. Hon. Gentlemen say, the emergency is not great; but as some will not believe in a flood while it drowns only those in cellars, others will not give credit to the existence of famine until it reaches Belgrave-square. The hon. Members for Hertford and Warwick made an attack on the League, because they were said to purchase votes in the counties. I recommend them to read the decision of the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. He says it was a course not only legal but laudable. If there be any Member of this House who fears that the incompleteness of the Reform Bill may give cause for agitation, it must be a matter of rejoicing to him that a mode has been discovered by which tens of thousands of honest, industrious, and meritorious artisans have brought themselves within the pale of the Constitution. But not a farthing have the Anti-Corn-Law League given for qualifications. We merely ask those who are of free-trade principles to qualify for counties if they have the means of doing so. A noble Lord elsewhere has called on the Government to put down that proceeding. The League is expressly framed for the purpose of procuring the abolition of the Corn Laws; and when that abolition is effected, its organization will be instantaneously dissolved—and not till then. I doubt not that the class of men, who, through its instrumentality may obtain their franchise, will use it at least as independently as the tenant-farmers, and

as much for the good of their country. I ask the hon. Members opposite, representing pocket boroughs, and nomination boroughs, what they imagine their countrymen will think of the course they have pursued; when, if there were truth in the Minister—if there were truth in the statements of the hon. Member for Cork, and of all those who had any opportunity of being acquainted with the facts, there was a terrible calamity impending over the country, for which somebody must be responsible? The Government say they will not take that responsibility upon their shoulders, and sooner than do so, they risk everything to remove it, and ask this House to do that which common justice makes imperative. I ask you if you think that the execution of your vengeance against the Minister will be held as any excuse for the course you are now pursuing, by your country and by posterity? Do you believe it will? What a glorious recompense will it be to you, if, after that you have turned the Minister out of office, and have appealed to the country, you should see famine and distress stalking throughout the land, and recollect that you have been, through your factious proceedings in this House, the means of aggravating want and suffering among your fellow creatures?

MR. G. HUDSON: In rising, Sir, to state the views which I entertain on this important question, I think I may fairly bespeak the indulgence of the House, for though I am in the habit of addressing public meetings, I am now about to speak on a question of great importance in an assembly with the forms of which I am imperfectly acquainted. Sir, I must say, in the first instance, that I have not been returned for a pocket borough—and that I came here on as independent grounds as the hon. Gentleman who last addressed the House. I will go further, and say that to the constituency who elected me, I can go back with as much confidence, and as much honesty of purpose, as that hon. Gentleman can revisit those whom he represents. Sir, this is a subject to which I have given the deepest consideration. Before I had the honour of being a Member of this House, I read with the greatest interest the speeches of the right hon. Baronet, and thought upon them as an individual who had a right to feel deeply in the welfare of his fellow men. I have listened with the closest attention to the speeches of the right hon. Baronet since I entered Parliament; and I confess that, having applied the most anxious consideration to his arguments, I am confirmed in the belief that those opinions which I entertained when I addressed the electors of Sunderland, were both sound and constitutional. While I deplore most deeply the calamity which it is anticipated may take place in Ireland, in consequence of the unfortunate train of events that has arisen there, and many comments upon which have been introduced into this debate; while I am prepared to sympathise with the sufferings which may possibly grow out of those unfortunate occurrences in the sister country; I nevertheless contend that this calamity, sudden in its effect, and which can easily be met by special measures of relief, should not be made the basis of a call upon this House to pass a measure of legislation which may injuriously affect the great interests of the country. I think that the right hon. Baronet has not treated his party with the fairness which they have a right to expect from him. I confess that I cannot coincide with the view which the right hon. Baronet has thought fit to adopt. In common with him, I entertain a strong sense of the emergency of the occasion; but, with the conviction pressing on his mind that it was necessary to do something at once, why, I ask, did he not come down to Parliament prepared to propose a measure, the object of which would be the immediate alleviation, if not removal, of the great misery, sickness, and distress, which are said to exist in Ireland? I regret that, not being provided with any such measure, and not intending to propose one, he should have dwelt with such harrowing effect on that subject; and entertaining, as I do, the deepest commiseration for the wretchedness which has been described to us as likely to ensue in Ireland, in consequence of the failure of the usual supply of food there, I call on the right hon. Baronet at once to provide for that emergency. I am sure that every one not divested of right feeling will give his cordial support to any such measure. I freely give mine; but I object to be called on to assist in passing a measure of general legislation to meet a merely special emergency. Having fairly stated to the House my views upon this branch presented to us for consideration, I come to the question itself—the policy of a repeal of the Corn Laws; and that, in my opinion, is a question of the gravest importance—of too much importance to be embarrassed with the extraneous

matters which the right hon. Baronet has introduced into its discussion. The right hon, Baronet certainly grounded the appeal which he made to the House chiefly on the success of his Tariff. Last night he found that ground untenable, and went back to the state of things in the year 1825; but, Sir, for my part, I believe that there were other measures which contributed to the prosperity of the country rather than the action of the Tariff of 1842, even though that Tariff included the Premier's all-important repeal of the duty upon grease. Let us examine what was the condition of the country when the right hon. Baronet assumed what he calls the "helm of public affairs." I recollect that my first interview with any Member of Her Majesty's present Government had reference to the construction of a railway of some importance between England and Scotland. At that time the depression was so great, and the foreign exchanges were so much against us—in consequence, be it observed, of the importation of corn—at that time, I say, the balance of trade was so much against us, that it was impossible to raise funds for any railway purpose whatever; and in order to carry out a system which will, I believe, confer greater benefits on the country than any of the Prime Minister's measures —I was obliged to go from company to company, to beg that, with respect to the sum of about 500,000*l.*, they would consent to guarantee some 6 per cent. to the proprietary of the line in question. Now, from 1842 a change came over the state of public affairs. We were then blessed with abundant harvests; and I must say that, when the right hon. Baronet spoke last night, I think that, in his exultation at our recent prosperity, he should not have forgotten that it was to those harvests, and to the success of railway speculations, that we were indebted for our national prosperity. [Sir R. PEEL: Hear, hear.] It is well for the right hon. Baronet to say "Hear, hear;" and had the prosperity I refer to been produced during a period when there was a large importation of corn, I perhaps might have joined in his "Hear, hear," also. But such was not the case. The prosperity was coincident with home production, not with importation. The right hon. Baronet spoke of the silk trade, and, said he, "See how the silk trade has increased." I admit it; but that trade has flourished under a system of protection. There has been a duty upon foreign silks; and what we want with respect to foreign corn is a similar duty for a similar purpose — a protection not immoderately large, but adequate to enable us to meet the burden of poor's rates, highway rates, land tax, and the other charges to which the agriculturists are peculiarly liable. The right hon. Baronet proposes to reduce the duty on shoes, paper, and other articles of manufacture. Why, Sir, I would ask him is this not a question of labour? The whole question resolves itself into that. If it were merely a question of machinery, I know we might contend, and contend successfully, with the whole world; but when it comes to be a question of labour, the burdens and the heavy taxation which the labourers of this country are subjected to, makes all the difference. The right hon. Baronet calls upon the poor man—the artisan, to exert himself and enter into competition with the labour of the world, but he seems to forget there are charges imposed upon the poor man here, which shackle his exertions and impair his energies, from which the artisan and the labourer of other countries are free. The shoemaker of France who contends against him, has to pay no poor rate, highway rate, or other burdens, has a great advantage in the contest. I have, however, no fear of the competition of the labour of France, or any other country, against the labour of this, if both are placed upon the same footing. We have been talking about the price of corn; and it is a question for serious consideration —and to this I would invite the especial attention of the House — what is the probable price at which we shall be able to purchase corn in this country, under the measure of the right hon. Baronet? I have taken some pains to ascertain what will be the probable price of wheat when the Government Bill shall have passed—I mean in the year 1849, when that measure will be in full operation. I have had large dealings in corn, and speak as a practical man; and I have not felt justified in offering any opinion to the House, until I consulted with men of practice and experience on the subject. This is a question which I think important, and which the House ought to weigh well before it decides on the proposition which has been submitted to it. In the year 1837 I had a corn transaction, in which I was enabled to deliver wheat at a port in this country —all charges paid, at 25*s.* a quarter. [An hon. MEMBER: In what year?] In the year 1837 I was enabled to deliver wheat

in a port of this country at 25*s.* a quarter, each bushel weighing 61½ lbs. Now, I ask, what will be the case in 1849, supposing this measure to pass? And I say before you legislate on a matter of such importance—a measure affecting such vital interests—a measure that must tend to the weal or ill of the country—before you come to a decision repealing the Corn Laws altogether, you ought to have an account of the probable price at which corn can be sold, when this change shall have been effected. Why, if I were to add 10*s.* per quarter as the probable effect of free trade in corn to the 25*s.* I have stated, I do not think I should be taking an unfair view of the matter, or a view that is not borne out by the information I have derived from the average prices of corn under the new Bill. I shall rejoice if it should be otherwise; but at the same time I cannot refuse to give to the House information obtained from sources of the highest authority, and from my own practical experience. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War spoke the other night of the distress which prevailed amongst the farmers and agricultural labourers of the county of Wilts. I heard the right hon. Gentleman's statement with considerable dismay; but I should like to ask him, when he said that protection was of no benefit to the farmer, whether he thought that 35*s.* or 40*s.* per quarter will make the farmer better off than he would be with 45*s.* or 50*s.*? To state this, it seems to me, is a mockery and an attempt to deceive. I listened with much attention to the speech of the right hon. Gentleman (Mr. S. Herbert), and to his statements as to existing distress in Wiltshire. The hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien) has invited the right hon. Gentleman to visit that county. I invite the right hon. Gentleman to visit Yorkshire, and I promise him he will not find distress, or anything like distress, there; but I will not answer for what may ensue if the present Bill pass into a law. As to the question being a matter of rent, I believe firmly and honestly that it is no such thing; for if land were let without rent, the farmer would be unable, under the new law, to cultivate it and obtain prices that would remunerate him. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government believes that the farmers will be as they were before, and that it will not be necessary to make any relaxation from the charges of income tax; which, under the present law, the right hon. Baronet will take care that the farmer shall pay whether he realizes it or not. Now, I have got a paper here, to which I beg the attention of the House, and from which I shall take the liberty of quoting the language of those gentlemen who advocate the measures of free trade, which it seems the right hon. Baronet is to be the great instrument to carry out. It is a paper which I do not know whether or not the right hon. Baronet has ever seen—it is called the "League"—and that paper has ventured an opinion as to what will be the result of the operation of the proposed Bill in the year 1849. Having stated that it was probable the Bill would work well, they go on to state that it is equally probable that the "1st of February, 1849, may be the commencement of a period of unexampled distress to the whole class of farmers, a distress and ruin reacting in the most fearful way on the entire community." That is the opinion expressed by those persons who are the great agitators of this measure. I for one am not prepared, in the excitement of a moment, or under temporary pressure, to recant the opinions which I have entertained for many years. I am not prepared, because the right hon. Baronet has thought proper to change his opinions, for reasons which I believe are most unsatisfactory to every person who has heard them—I am not prepared, I say, to overthrow in a moment those principles under the influence of which this country has been brought to a state of prosperity unexampled in the history of the world. What was the state in which the right hon. Baronet found this country when he thought right to agitate the question which he has now brought before the House? I believe it is admitted on all hands that it exhibited every feature of returning prosperity. Agriculture was rising from its previous depression, and looking as prosperous as its most sanguine friends could wish. The commercial interests were equally prosperous, the exchanges constantly running in favour of this country. But, Sir, I will acknowledge that the effect of all this prosperity was to create a rise in prices. Still I should like to ask this House and the public, why, when all the interests of the country are prosperous, should not agriculture be prosperous among the rest? When bricklayers are getting 28*s.* a week, stonemasons 30*s.*, and labourers from 18*s.* to 21*s.*, why should not the agricultural interest enjoy that prosperity which extends to all other in-

terests? But it seems as if a bane were to be put upon this interest, which I believe to be the great interest of the country. I am aware that it is utterly impossible in a country like this to contend for anything like an excessive protective duty, or anything like monopoly. But the right hon. Baronet does not carry out his own principles: he still leaves 10 per cent on manufactured goods. The shoemakers, for instance, are most hardly treated. I know several of that industrious class, and I know well that they will not be able to contend with the overwhelming flood of foreign competition which is preparing for them. Then there are the paper-stainers. It may be known that York has long been famous for paper-hangings. I know a gentleman in that trade who employs great numbers of persons at wages varying from eighteen shillings to a guinea. He has a most extended trade in all the large towns of the country. But, no sooner did the right hon. Baronet bring forward his Bill, than my friend received several letters stating that the effect of the measure would be to introduce large quantities of paper of French manufacture, this paper having previously been subject to a very large duty. My friend immediately reduced his works, and was obliged to discharge several men from his employment. I know that these are are not interests in which the great bulk of the nation are concerned; and that they may not, therefore, engage the attention of the House; but the real question is, "Are the real interests of the country concerned in the measure of the right hon. Gentleman?" I believe that the effect of this measure will be to throw a large tract of land out of cultivation. I believe that similar results will take place to those which occurred in the years 1835-36, when the average price of wheat was 39*s*. At that period large tracts of land were thrown out of cultivation, and applied to other purposes. If the proposition of the right hon. Baronet should be adopted, the consequences will be that the land will be uncultivated. No doubt for a short time there would be great cheapness; we should revel in low prices, and in the meanwhile have an abundance of supply. But my humble opinion is, that the right hon. Baronet will not derive that benefit from this circumstance which he anticipates. He will lose the best of all customers—the home customers—and then comes the time of a bad harvest, and a sudden change from low prices to high prices. What would the right hon. Baronet then do? If he continued to rule the destinies of this nation, the right hon. Gentleman would have to come down and propose some extraordinary measure for the sustenance and maintenance of the people. What would be the effect of low prices? It withdraws capital from the cultivation of the land; the skill and industry of the people are applied to other purposes and pursuits, and ultimately the country is thrown entirely upon a foreign supply of food, that supply being dependent upon circumstances over which this country never has any control. I believe that the effect of this measure will be to paralyse the industry of the country. Indeed, I fear its effect has already been very seriously felt throughout the land. The right hon. Baronet has referred to what occurred in October—namely, the alarm of a deficient harvest. He feared that we should have to send out our gold to buy foreign corn. The consequence would be, that the bankers, as they always did when they saw any prospect of our being obliged to buy foreign corn, would immediately shut up their coffers, and would show an unwillingness to afford that accommodation which they are ever ready to do under more favourable circumstances. The right hon. Baronet says, that this was rather the effect of other causes than of the price of provisions; but I can only express my entire conviction that we shall see the same thing happen whenever we have a short harvest. In short, Sir, my belief is, that if we agree to the measure of the right hon. Baronet, we shall throw a vast quantity of land out of cultivation, and the effects cannot but be most ruinous. But I understood the right hon. Baronet, when he brought forward his plan, to state to the House that he had a number of equivalents to offer to the landed interest as a compensation for the loss of protection. But on looking very carefully through the whole of his scheme, I must say that I cannot discover those equivalents. I ask the right hon. Baronet why he did not deal with the poor rates—why a man who is in the receipt of 3,000*l*. a year from the funds should not contribute in the same proportion to the poor rate as the man who derives 3,000*l*. a year from land. Why should you cast the burden of supporting the poor wholly upon the land? If the right hon. Baronet is determined to pass this measure, then let him charge the support of the poor upon the Consolidated Fund. I, as a practical man, assert that

there is no difficulty whatever in doing this. I have had to do many things quite as difficult as that. Why, I ask again, should the fundholder, receiving his 3,000*l.* a year, contribute nothing whatever to the maintenance of the poor? It is monstrous that such an exemption should be made in his favour. The whole country is bound to provide for its poor by the highest command that can emanate to man. There are other burdens which are peculiarly oppressive to the landed interest. I recollect a deputation waiting on the right hon. Baronet respecting the malt tax. He said then that there were certain burdens which the land must necessarily support, and that they had, therefore, better be quiet and say nothing about it. But I again repeat, I do not see why the land should bear the principal burden of the poor rates, and the fundholder entirely escape. If the poor rate were charged on the Consolidated Fund, the poor would be provided for wherever they might be found; and there would, in that case, be no necessity for their removal from place to place, as the present law of settlement now renders necessary. Nor do I see why the land should be exclusively burdened with the county rates. I think it is extremely unfair to the agriculturists. What we want is justice. If you tax malt for the benefit of the revenue, why should you not likewise tax the manufactures of the country? Why not say to the manufacturers, "You shall not make cotton into gowns, before it has paid a tax for the benefit of the State." You say to the farmers, that they shall not make their barley into malt without paying a tax to the State. Why should you not say the same to the cotton manufacturer, if such be necessary to the State? Then, I say, this is really a labourers' question; it comes down, after all, to the poor labourer, whether a manufacturing operative or an agricultural labourer. Why not cheapen to him his tea and his coffee, before you call upon him in this way, and thus tax his industry and his exertions? Why not give him a boon along with that, if he must, in the end, pay the tax? For it is absurd to suppose that the effect of this alteration must not fall upon the labourer. Fall upon him it will—fall upon him it must, because the very thing which we have to contend with, as an agricultural country, against other States, is, that our labour is dearer than that of other countries. For the farmer of this country is bound to pay more; he is charged with many other things, which are no charge upon the labourer or the grower of corn in any other country. And, therefore, I say, if you call upon us to contend with these things, put us upon an equal ground. Why should we be called upon to contend with other countries, when we have not the same advantages? I admit there is the protection, as it is called, of the freight; but is it not notorious that the freights from Hamburgh and Dantzic are extremely small? But this is not a measure which ought to be passed hastily; it ought not to be forced upon the country without giving it the opportunity fairly to express its opinion. It is impossible to deny that the present Parliament, either by implication, or by direct declaration, was returned upon the question whether an eight shillings' fixed duty should be adopted, or whether the protective principles of the right hon. Baronet should be predominant. Let an appeal to the country be made, and let the country decide as to this great and important measure. You have already once had a Parliament that abused the confidence of this great country. At that time, I did not take a deep interest in politics; but I recollect the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill, and I recollect, as a consequence of the course then pursued by Parliament, the passing of a great measure of Reform—a reform which in my opinion, never would have passed, had it not been that Parliament had abandoned the great principles on which it was elected. Though the right hon. Baronet may be able, by the force of his majority, to carry this measure through Parliament, I do trust that he will have some regard for the feelings of the country—that he will appeal to the people, and let the country determine whether the Bill shall pass or not. If the relief of Ireland be the object of Her Majesty's Government, let them bring in any measure they think wise and expedient for the immediate relief of that important country, and I am satisfied there is no Member of this House who will not readily assent to any such temporary measure. I am perfectly satisfied, from my intercourse with my fellow countrymen—and it is pretty extensive—that however they may advocate this measure or the other in Parliament, they are, for the most part, decidedly hostile to the passing of this Bill in the present Parliament. If you pass this measure, you will make it objectionable to the country. The right hon. Baronet has referred to the parties who have been obliged to

resign their seats. It was only their duty to do so; and I think it is not a subject of regret, but of rejoicing, that there have been found in this House some hon. Members, who are not forgetful of the solemn pledges which they gave, either by implication or direct promise—who are not forgetful of those engagements which bind man to man in this great commercial country—and who are actuated by feelings so honourable as to induce them to vacate their seats, rather than sacrifice their honour. I know, Sir, that the observations which I have addressed to this House are unworthy of the acceptance of the House and of the Government; but I can assure the Government that when I first aspired to a seat in this House, my principal object was to support the Government and the right hon. Baronet. I went to the hustings, and I stand here, with the honest purpose of promoting the interests of my country; but I do not stand here to vote for a measure the offspring of a divided Government, and which has not been the subject of that mature reflection which the measures of that Government have hitherto received. I hope the country will not suffer by the abandonment of this measure at present; and I think the Government will best consult the interests and feelings of the country, by, as I said before, giving their immediate attention to the condition of Ireland; by allowing this measure, perhaps, to pass through a division, and then appealing to the country to see whether there shall be protection or no protection—to see, Sir, whether the labourer of this country shall be called on to compete with the labourers of Poland and Prussia—the former receiving 12*s.* and 14*s.* a week, and the foreign labourer getting only 4*s.* or 5*s.* a week. I say let the constituencies of this country decide the question. The hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War said that the labourers of Wiltshire were only earning 8*s.* a week. I would recommend him, then, to give his serious attention to the alleviation of the pitiable condition of the labouring classes in his district, and he will then confer a vast benefit on his county. I can only say that if such a state of things had existed in my neighbourhood, I should have been ashamed to have acknowledged it, and should have tried to remove it. I feel that in opposing this measure, I shall be performing my duty to my constituents, and to that commercial interest in which I am so deeply and so interestedly concerned. The right hon. Baronet stated that he was quite ready, when it would seem fit, to throw aside the three years that he gave to agriculture. I shall shall give my vote, believing that protection is a benefit to the agricultural interest. But as between the immediate repeal, and the extension of protection, I am, of course, in favour of the latter. If the right hon. Baronet had made out a case that the protection to agriculture should be less than hitherto, I should be prepared perhaps, to go along with him. It may be charged against me that I am deeply interested in land; but though I am largely interested in commercial pursuits also, I believe that I am as incapable as the right hon. Baronet of shaping my course by any reasons but a regard to the good of the country. This measure is favourably received by the Anti-Corn-Law League, though it may end, as they state, in an unexampled state of distress, spread over the whole of the community. I will conclude by expressing my intention to give my vote against the measure of the right hon. Baronet.

Debate adjourned to Thursday.

House adjourned at a quarter past Two o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Wednesday, February 18, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—*Reported.* County Works Presentments (Ireland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED. By Mr. Rice, from Inhabitants of the Parish of Eythorne, and by Mr. Thornely, from Officers and Members of a Sick Club, called the "Rose of Sharon Lodge," at Bilsden, for Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Mr. Allix, from Landowners, Occupiers, and others, of the Parish of Fordham, against the Government Measure respecting Customs and Corn Importation.—By Mr. Waddington, from Magistrates and Guardians of the Poor of Mildenhall Union, for Rating Owners in lieu of Occupiers of Tenements.—By Sir Robert Ferguson, from Merchants, Traders, and others, of the City of Londonderry, for Alteration in the Duties on Tea.—By several hon. Members, from an immense number of places, in favour of a Ten Hours' (Factory) Bill.—By Mr. Aglionby, from Cockermouth, and Captain Pechell, from Brighton, for Remission of Sentence upon Frost, Williams, and Jones.—By several hon. Members, from various places, against Enrolment of the Militia.—By Mr. Aldam, from Inhabitants of Leeds, for Peace with America, and against Enrolment of Militia.—By Sir George Strickland, from Preston, for the Abolition of Punishment of Death.—By Mr, Moffatt, from Provisional Directors of the London-Hounslow, and Western Railway Company, for Alteration of the Law regarding Railway Deposits.

RAILWAY DEPOSITS.

MR. MOFFATT moved for leave to bring in a Bill to alter and amend the Act 1 and 2 Victoria, c. 117, commonly known as the Railway Deposits Act. The hon. Member stated that the principal alterations which he proposed to effect in the provisions of the Act were, firstly, to empower subscrib-

ers to Railway Companies whose subscriptions shall have been invested in the public funds, or other Government securities, to transfer such securities simply to the proper officer, instead of being obliged to make cash payments; and secondly, to abolish the present clumsy and obstructive machinery of the Court of Chancery with regard to railway companies, and to effect some other simplifications of the present law.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, he had no objection to the introduction of the Bill by the hon. Member; but it must be understood that he could not pledge himself to support the details.

PARISH OF FARNHAM.

CAPTAIN PECHELL moved for a Return of the copy of any Instructions issued by the Poor Law Commissioners for the purpose of uniting the parish of Farnham, in Surrey, now under Gilbert's Act, with certain other parishes under the Poor Law Act; also, for a copy of any memorial to the Poor Law Commissioners from the ratepayers of the parish of Farnham remonstrating against such union or any interference whatever. The hon. and gallant Member said he had given notice of his intention to move for this return, in consequence of the extraordinary proceedings of the Poor Law Commissioners. The parish of Farnham was a single parish under Gilbert's Act, and that Act had been shown to work satisfactorily in it. The law, under certain circumstances, permitted a single parish to subsist without being annexed to a Poor Law Union; and, considering that the Report of the Parliamentary Committee relative to the Gilbert Unions had been carried only by the casting vote of the chairman against the Gilbert incorporations, it did appear extraordinary that this unfortunate parish should be taken out of them to be made the centre of a Poor Law Union. He contended that this certainty should not take place until a searching inquiry had been made into the working and operation of the Poor Law Act. He could not see the policy or expediency of the Government meddling with a parish, the management of which had been so satisfactory that it had not been considered necessary to bring it before the Gilbert Unions Committee. To annex it to a Poor Law Union without inquiry was, to say the least, most extraordinary. Great dissatisfaction existed at it; the inhabitants had met; and they had unanimously agreed to a memorial against such an outrage. Whatever opinions the Government might formerly have entertained with regard to the Poor Law, and the right hon. the Secretary of State for the Home Department in particular, he (Captain Pechell) hoped that their change of opinion upon the important subject now under discussion in that House, would be so extended, that they would see the advantages to be derived from preserving the Gilbert Unions.

Returns ordered.

GRINDING BONES.

CAPTAIN PECHELL asked Her Majesty's Government whether it was their intention to lay upon the Table copies of the Papers received from those guardians of Poor Law Unions who had remonstrated against the practice of bone grinding? The right hon. Baronet (Sir James Graham) had informed the House, on a late occasion, that there were nine boards of guardians who had expressed a wish to continue the practice until their stocks had been exhausted, and that he had given them the desired permission. He now wished to know, also, when the Papers relative to those nine cases, which the right hon. Baronet had promised, would be laid upon the Table.

MR. MANNERS SUTTON thought it would hardly be wise to raise any discussion on the subject referred to by the hon. and gallant Member at the present moment. If the hon. and gallant Member had given him notice of the question he intended to put, he (Mr. M. Sutton) would have been prepared with a reply. He was at present unable to give an answer, but he would make inquiry.

House adjourned shortly after One o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, February 19, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—1ª. County Works Presentment (Ireland); Drainage, &c. (Ireland); Charitable Trusts.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. By Lord Dacre, from Exeter, for an Inquiry into the Proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League.—From the New Ross Electoral Division of the Ross Poor Law Union, for an equal Rate in all the Electoral Divisions of a Poor Law Union.—By Lord Rosebery, from the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council, of Linlithgow, for the immediate Abolition of the Corn Laws.—By Lord Redesdale, from Landowners, Tenant Farmers, and others, of Northumberland, for Protection of the Agricultural Interest.—By Lord Southampton, from Landowners, Tenant Farmers, Labourers, and others, of Byfield, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE.

Lord DACRE, in presenting a petition from Exeter, for inquiry into the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, in inducing parties resident at a distance to purchase 40*s.* freeholds in counties, observed that the present was not the time to enter into a discussion on the general subject; but he could not help reminding their Lordships, that in 1829 so great were the evils in Ireland produced by the 40*s.* freeholders, that the Legislature were compelled to get rid of them; and, therefore, the proceedings of the League, in the creation of these votes, could not be too much condemned. He did not mean to say that the acts of the Anti-Corn-Law League in this respect were not legal, as they had the authority of almost the first law officer in this country (Lord Chief Justice Tindal); but he considered that if they were in accordance with the letter of the law, they were not in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. He considered, therefore, that this petition was worthy of the attention of their Lordships.

Lord KINNAIRD said, that this was the second time this Session that the noble Lord had called attention to the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League; and he, as a member of the League, agreed with the prayer of the petition for an inquiry. The League courted inquiry. Every thing that had been done by the League was fair and above-board. As to the League's getting hold of the counties, he could assure the noble Lord that he need not be alarmed about the minute subdivision of land caused by the creation of 40*s.* freeholds. Men of all parties and classes had bought them. If the noble Lord wished to open the whole question of the Reform Bill, he (Lord Kinnaird) should be glad to go into it with him; but when they talked of creating large numbers of 40*s.* freeholders, the nomination boroughs must not be forgotten, which were so openly controlled by Peers of that House. He maintained that the League were acting legally and constitutionally in giving facilities to persons who wished to acquire votes; and they were only doing what had been done by others for worse ends. Why, there was the town of Buckingham, where the proprietor, using the most legal means, could return any Member he chose to the Lower House; and the same thing was done in many other cases by noble Lords on both sides of the House, as both parties were well known to have their nomination boroughs. The Anti-Corn-Law League was quite willing and prepared to go into the whole question; and he, as an individual, should rejoice in such an inquiry, as preparatory to a better reform of Parliament. In present circumstances, if those who were called protectionists or monopolists went to the constituencies, his firm conviction was, that, from their power over nomination boroughs, and other influences, they might return a party adverse to free trade; but if they did so they might depend upon it that nothing would be more likely to raise into existence illegal or unconstitutional bodies, instead of such safe and legal associations as they now found in the Anti-Corn-Law League.

Lord REDESDALE, in presenting a petition from Northumberland, praying that protection might not be removed from agriculture, said that, in his opinion, the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, in regard to registration, were directly unconstitutional, although, according to the strict letter of the law, they were legal. The Constitution of this country required that the population and property of each electoral district should return Members to represent that district in Parliament; and the Legislature had more than once interfered to prevent the disturbance of that right by strangers. When, therefore, he saw a body saying that Liverpool and Manchester should secure the representation of Cheshire, he called that an interference with the rights of the people of Cheshire. When, again, he saw the same body, in one of their printed addresses, saying that the inhabitants of London ought to secure Hertfordshire, because it was near to London, he called that an unconstitutional interference with the electors of Hertfordshire. If the Legislature neglected to do something to put a stop to this undue interference with the election of Members of Parliament, they would have clubs and knots of persons constantly interfering with the constituencies of England, contrary to their privileges and to the spirit of the Constitution. The Anti-Corn-Law League were worse than the Duke of Bedford, in making the celebrated fagot votes in Huntingdonshire. He created on his property in that county more votes than belonged to it, though still within the range of law; but it was held, nevertheless, to be an undue interference with the electors of Huntingdon. But, under the operations of the League, they might have parties whose interests were solely the interests of Manchester, and not

those of Huntingdon, coming forward and swamping the people of Huntingdon in the election of a Member of Parliament, so that the general interests of that county were, by these means, left unrepresented. If they went on in this way, the consequence might be that one interest would obtain the representation of every constituency in the kingdom. If Parliament did not give a strong expression of its will in regard to this matter — unless the practice should naturally drop — ("Hear.") He understood the meaning of that "hear," and would refer to it again; but in the meantime, he must say that, unless the Legislature interfered, the consequence would be, that Parliament would cease to be the most important body in the country. A great deal that was going on in Ireland and in this country had a tendency to lower Parliament in the eyes of the country; especially the House of Commons, as that branch of the Legislature was more affected by it than that to which their Lordships belonged. People would begin to look to the proceedings of other bodies more than to Parliament; and in process of time would learn to say that they did not care about the House of Commons, but would rather look to such bodies as the Anti-Corn-Law League or the Repeal Association, who could counteract the decisions of Parliament. He must say, therefore, that unless this evil was watched, there was a process going on in this country, and in Ireland particularly — for it began there — that would tend in effect to alter the whole Constitution of the country. That such a state of things should be going on without Parliament interfering—without calling forth the attention of those whose peculiar duty it was to watch over the interests of the country—without any interference on the part of the Government, was not very creditable to the parties concerned. As to the evil dropping, he knew what noble Lords opposite meant by that. It just amounted to this—that if they gave those people what they asked, they would drop their undue practices. Now, was this the way to meet such a course as that followed by those parties? No. It might be said that the people were with them, and that what they asked, therefore, should be conceded; but if it was so, why did they not let the people alone? The effect of conceding the objects which the Anti-Corn-Law League and the Repeal Association demanded, would just be to encourage any other body of agitators that might choose to arise. He repeated that the practice of the League was contrary to the spirit of the Constitution, and could never be followed either for a good or bad purpose, without evil resulting from it.

Lord KINNAIRD was not lawyer enough to know what might be the constitutional rule in this matter; but this he knew, that the practice complained of was followed by all parties. One of the watchwords of the party to which the noble Lord belonged was, "Register! register! register!" Well, the League attended to the registrations, and made legal votes for that purpose in a way much more legal than was followed by proprietors to an enormous extent in Scotland. He agreed with the noble Lord that this was an abuse, and he was quite ready to go into the whole matter, and have the entire abuse reformed. But he thought that the Anti-Corn-Law League were in the mean time justified in adopting the same legal means with others for the promotion of their object; and he would tell the noble Lord that, if the repeal of the Corn Laws was carried immediately, the Anti-Corn-Law League would be dissolved. It would not be continued for any other purpose, the sole object of the association being to obtain the repeal of the Corn Laws. Perhaps the knowledge of this fact might somewhat relieve the mind of the noble Lord.

Earl GREY observed, that whatever party first commenced the practice of increasing the constituency far beyond what a country naturally should have, he must say that he concurred with the noble Lord opposite in thinking that the existence of such a party embodied as the Anti-Corn-Law League was a serious evil. But when he said it was a serious evil, he must also say that he thought it was only a symptom of a still greater and still more serious evil, and that was, the existence of a state of the law which a large proportion of the intelligent people of this country felt to be an intolerable grievance—a grievance against which they found it necessary to take even such means as these for relieving themselves. The noble Lord had said, and said truly, that the manner in which these things were gone about, both in this country and in Ireland, and in respect to Irish affairs, was calculated to lower the authority of Parliament: he cordially concurred with him in that view. But he would ask, what was the cure they ought to apply to such evils? It was not by adopting any coercive means to prevent such manifestations of

opinion—it was not by adopting any law to prevent the existence of the Catholic Association, or the Anti-Corn-Law League, or preventing the purchase of property to make votes for those not resident in a county—it was not by any machinery of that kind they could formally grapple with this evil; but it was by Parliament taking the lead of public opinion, instead of lagging in the rear—not waiting to be driven by the loudly-expressed wishes of the community to make necessary reforms—not waiting to be compelled by the voice of public opinion that had been roused into agitation by the long continuance of a great grievance and abuse. It was by looking beforehand—by taking timely care to remedy evils before they were felt to be intolerable—it was by Parliament again performing its ancient duty of leading public opinion, instead of waiting to be driven by that opinion, that they could hope to put an end to those evils of which the noble Lord complained. No man could see more strongly than he did the inconvenience of all the great changes of modern times being deferred, till they were passed, not as matters flowing from the judgment of Parliament, but from necessity. He thought they incurred high responsibility who prevented the public from having sooner understood what was required, for having used their influence to perpetuate ancient prejudices and unsound opinions. Those who had done so, misguided, no doubt, themselves; and, shortsighted as to the consequences that were about to follow, it was they, and not the party of the League or the party of the Catholic Association, who were responsible for the great evils that might result from the course complained of by the noble Lord.

Lord ASHBURTON observed, that the noble Lord opposite took it for granted that all public opinion was good; that any views which were opposed to public opinion must be wrong; and that, therefore, the latter should be adopted. If public opinion in this case was with the Anti-Corn-Law League, what necessity was there for creating fictitious votes to carry Members in Lancashire and Cheshire, and the West Riding of Yorkshire? He regarded the course pursued by the League as fraught with disastrous consequences to the country. It was an evil with which Government could not be dealing rightly unless it proposed some measure to check and stop it.

Petition to be laid on the Table.

AFFAIRS OF THE RIO DE LA PLATA.

Lord BEAUMONT rose to move, that the correspondence which had taken place between the Government of this country and of France with respect to the Rio de la Plata should be laid before their Lordships. In making this Motion, he hoped the House would allow him, as briefly as he could, to trace the chief events which had happened in the Rio de la Plata, with the object of showing that the noble Earl at the head of the Department for Foreign Affairs, had not only adopted an impolitic course, but one which was at variance with the principles adopted by this country, and also at variance with its former practice. Their Lordships were aware that at the termination of the war between Brazil and the Argentine Confederation, in 1828, a Convention was made, by which the province of the Banda Oriental was constituted an independent State, under the title of the Republic of Uruguay. He wished their Lordships to pay particular attention to this Convention, because it was mentioned by the noble Lord (Earl of Aberdeen) in the instructions sent by him to Mr. Ouseley; and it was also referred to as an excuse for the conduct of the Cabinet of Brazil on a late occasion. The terms of that Convention were, that Uruguay should be maintained as an independent State, and that its independence should be guaranteed by the parties who signed that Treaty. There was an article in the Treaty which provided that in case of rebellion against the legitimate Government of Monte Video, the contracting parties should aid the Government in putting that rebellion down. The obligation of assisting the lawful President of Monte Video in maintaining his authority, was by this Convention imposed on Buenos Ayres for five years after the establishment of the new republic. The only names, however, appended to the Treaty were those of the representatives of Buenos Ayres and Brazil. England only recommending peace, and her name not being affixed to the Treaty, therefore took no obligation upon herself to support the legitimate Government of Uruguay. England was a mediating, not a guaranteeing Power: she therefore imposed on herself no obligation, and obtained no right. Subsequently to that period, particularly in 1829, and the following years, a sanguinary civil war raged in the Argentine Confederation between the Unitarians and Federalist party. General Rosas was one of the chiefs of the Federalists, and General

Lavalle one of the leaders of the Unitarians. General Lavalle, after assassinating the Governor of Buenos Ayres, and attempting to assassinate Rosas, became president; but he was afterwards obliged to capitulate to General Rosas, who became president of Buenos Ayres in his stead, and who had done more than any other person to establish the rule of law and justice in that country. In consequence of the defeat of their party, the Unitarians, in 1829, fled in great numbers to the Banda Oriental, and took up their abode in Monte Video. They carried on a war with the Federalist party in Buenos Ayres, and invaded their territories from time to time, but were again and again defeated. In 1837, a misunderstanding took place between France and Buenos Ayres, and the French blockaded the town. At that time General Oribe was at the head of the Government of Monte Video, and the French applied to him for his co-operation in the blockade; but Oribe refused to depart in any degree from the position which he had assumed, and determined to maintain the Convention which had been made in 1828. Very fortunately, however, for the French, during that time a party was raised up against Oribe. This party consisted of the Unitarians who had fled from Buenos Ayres, and strangers who had come to reside in the Republic of Uruguay. At the head of this party was General Riveira, and he succeeded in driving Oribe out of Monte Video, became president of the Republic of Uruguay, and assisted the French in their blockade of Buenos Ayres. Subsequently to this, in 1840, the French thought proper to make peace with General Rosas; and in the treaty of peace Rosas agreed to respect the Convention of 1828, and the independence of Monte Video. General Riveira, however, and his party did not come to terms of peace with Buenos Ayres, but continued to invade the country of the Argentine Confederation at the head of a band of Unitarians. Riveira was subsequently defeated, and in a short time Oribe succeeded in passing between Riveira and Monte Video. Oribe afterwards invaded the Banda Oriental country, which he did for the sole purpose, as he declared in his proclamation, of recovering his legitimate authority. General Rosas gave Oribe assistance, acting in the spirit of the Convention of 1828, which bound him to assist the legitimate Government of Monte Video in regaining its authority. Oribe gained possession of the whole territory of Uruguay, finding, when he arrived before Monte Video, that the whole native population of the State were in his favour. Still the town of Monte Video held out against him. In 1842, England offered her mediation between Oribe and Riveira, and, in 1843, France and England offered their joint mediation between the belligerent parties—but their mediation was refused. In 1843, at the instigation of Viscount Abrantes, they thought fit to interfere. Now, it must be borne in mind, that at that time General Oribe represented the lawful Government of Monte Video. Oribe was in possession of the whole country, except the town of Monte Video itself. Riveira had been defeated in the field; and the party who were cooped up in the town consisted of Italians, French, and Unitarians, only one hundred and fifty natives being in arms against Oribe, and that number had since that time been reduced to fifty natives. At that moment England interfered. For what purpose? Not surely to prevent the effusion of blood, because, had they not then interfered, Oribe would have recovered his power; permanent peace would have been established between Buenos Ayres and Monte Video; and at the same time, according to the bound words of General Rosas, the integrity of the Republic of Uruguay would have been secured. The intervention had prevented that happy result, and had caused the continuance of horrors which before they had tried to prevent, whilst in the distant provinces of the Argentine Confederation it caused the renewal of that frightful war known as the war between the Federalists and the Unitarians. Inspired by the hopes which the intervention raised, General Paz was allowed by the Brazilian Government to traverse their territories and invade Corrientes, a province of the Argentine republic, in which province, as well as in Entrerios, he was endeavouring to raise a revolt against the Government of General Rosas. If, therefore, the cessation of this effusion of blood was the noble Earl's object, this measure had tended to produce the very opposite effect, as peace had been prevented, and a new war commenced, in consequence of the intervention. Another object which had been put forward by the noble Earl for that intervention was the opening of the River Parana, and the other tributaries of the River Plate. Undoubtedly such an opening up of those rivers would be most desirable for the interests of British commerce. But the opening of the River

Parana depended essentially upon General Rosas, as it ran through a territory both sides of which belonged to him. We could not force a country, contrary to its own desire, to open up its rivers; because, if we insisted upon going up the River Parana, we should be establishing a most dangerous precedent, and the Americans might just as well insist on going down the St. Lawrence. Again, England's intervention was not to prevent a war between nation and nation, but a war between a faction in Monte Video and the remainder of the State—it was purely an internal war. The inconvenient consequences of that intervention seemed to have struck the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government; for he said in the House of Commons, in May, 1844—

"Let the House only look at the consequences of such a precedent as that of a neutral State, greatly superior in power, interfering forcibly in the foreign relations, and therefore necessarily in the internal government, of another State. Such a right did not exist by the law of nations; and, if such a step were taken, other powerful States might likewise interfere."

That was just what the noble Lord did in the Republic of Uruguay. Then, again, he should wish to know whether there had been a Convention between England and France to regulate their strange interference. He believed that there had been no Convention. Yet could anything be more contrary to the practice of nations, or more dangerous in its nature as a precedent, than that two powerful States should interfere with States like those of South America, where the minds of people were naturally led to believe that self-interest and aggrandizement were the sole grounds for an intervention where there was no Convention to which they could appeal—no positive act or instrument—beyond an instruction to our Minister, which could be shown to prove that there was no such intention. There might be some understanding between the noble Earl and the French Government; but, if so, let the noble Earl produce the Papers. Instructions sent out to our Minister, and instructions to the French Minister, were not sufficient; for it had been the invariable practice on similar occasions to guarantee all by a Convention. He repeated, he should like to know whether the noble Earl had taken the step he had taken to protect British commerce. Why, it was ruinous to British commerce, as the noble Earl would soon find out from the ruined merchants of Buenos Ayres; and the object could only be to support an armed rebellious faction in Monte Video, consisting of Italians, French, and Unitarians, who had purchased and sold the public property, and who were, through their lying instruments, the press, raising up every kind of evil passion. For them had the noble Earl interfered against Buenos Ayres and against General Rosas, who could alone give us command of the River Plate, and in whose power alone it was to advance the interests of British commerce. Let their Lordships look for an instant to the instructions which the noble Earl had sent out to Mr. Ouseley, the only document which the noble Earl had produced to explain his extraordinary conduct. In the first instance, amongst other general instructions, the noble Earl stated that the determination of Her Majesty's Government to put a termination to the war was shared in by the Government of France, and that it was the intention of the two countries to unite their influence, and, if need be, their force for that purpose. The noble Earl said he did not deny the right of Buenos Ayres to wage war like any other independent Power, so long as that war should be conducted according to the law of nations, and the practice of civilized men. "But," said the noble Earl, "the war in which the Argentine arms are at present engaged is waged against a State the independence of which Great Britain is virtually bound to uphold." That, however, was not the case; for, instead of being a declaration of war against the Argentine State, this war had been commenced to support the independence of the Argentine State against a mere faction of foreigners. He continued—"and the object of that war is to place the domestic Government of Monte Video in hands other than those to which the consent of the State has entrusted it." How could that be? Was not the election of Oribe a lawful election? He had all the people with him—fifty only of the natives had opposed him; and what did the noble Earl recommend as the means of establishing the lawful power of Monte Video, there being then two Presidents—Oribe, elected lawfully by the people, and Riveira, elected by a faction? Why, the noble Lord said, in his instructions to Mr. Ouseley—

"With the view, therefore, of setting at rest all jealousy on this score, it might perhaps be well that the conditions of peace should include on one side the removal of General Oribe from the Monte Videan territory, and, on the other, that any political refugees or other persons, whose presence in

Monte Video may be a reasonable source of disquietude to the Buenos Ayrean Government, should seek an asylum elsewhere. Amongst these General Riveira would, no doubt, be included."

The noble Earl, with the view of sustaining lawful authority, would send away all the lawful authorities that ever had existed. In such a case, what Government could go on? He (Lord Beaumont) was sure he could not imagine, unless, indeed, it was intended to place in power that very bad band of foreigners which now ruled the town of Monte Video. It seemed, however, that the noble Earl had, since that period, seen the error into which he had fallen; for, in his second despatch, dated November 5th, 1845, nearly nine months after the date of his first despatch, he quite abandoned the idea of sending away both Governments. That second despatch was directly at variance with the instructions in the first; and recent events were directly at variance with the instructions of the second; so that a scene of confusion and a succession of contradictions were enacted and put forward, by the diplomatic agents of the two countries that interfered, which might well puzzle the belligerent Powers. We were not acting as neutrals, and we did not profess to be allies. The conclusion, therefore, that the natives of Buenos Ayres and the Oriental State out of the walls of Monte Video came to was, that we were looking to ulterior objects of self-interest. For all these proceedings and unconstitutional interventions he (Lord Beaumont) felt it but justice to say that he entirely blamed the Government at home, and that he threw no blame whatever upon the diplomatic agents employed. Before he sat down, he must observe that he did not appear there as an apologist for General Rosas, nor did he wish to palliate in the least the charges which had been brought against him for his cruelties; but he did say that they had been enormously exaggerated: and not only that, but he would assert that, if they judged General Rosas according to the scale of morals and opinions in that country, they would find that he stood forward far superior, and in a much more favourable light, than most of the persons who had risen to power in that country. He felt convinced that, when the noble Earl recollected what had taken place in Guatemala, Venzuela, Mexico, and all those republics, he would see that, though General Rosas was not spotless, yet that he had rivals in his sanguinary habits, and rivals who far surpassed him in the monstrosity of their practices towards their fellow subjects. He certainly must say, that he never was more shocked in his life than by reading a publication put forward at Monte Video as the life and history of General Rosas; but he believed the whole to be an utter fabrication. With these remarks, he hoped that the Correspondence for which he moved would be laid upon the Table of the House.

The Earl of ABERDEEN said, that he had been so long accustomed to find the attention of his noble Friend opposite exclusively directed to the condition of the eastern part of Europe, and especially to questions connected with the interests and rights of the Turkish Empire, that he hoped he might consider this excursion to the Western world as some indication that, as far as Her Majesty's Government were concerned, the noble Lord had left all matters in the East in a tolerably satisfactory situation. The noble Lord had stigmatized very strongly the intervention of England and France in the affairs of La Plata, and had described it as entirely unnecessary and unjust. Now he ventured to think, that if ever there was a case in which a proceeding of this kind was justifiable, it was the case to which the noble Lord had called their Lordships' attention. The principles and objects of the intervention were explained in the instructions, a copy of which was now lying on their Lordships' Table. Their Lordships would recollect that for several years a most destructive war had existed in La Plata, carried on and accompanied by atrocities revolting to humanity—a war which in truth had no national object whatever, or any intelligible and public ground, but which was founded entirely on personal hatred and party rancour. It was very rarely indeed that any war could be just and wise; but this war was not only wicked, but was among the most senseless that ever afflicted mankind. During the whole course of this war the object of Great Britain had been to arrest its progress if possible. In 1841, the noble Lord who preceded him in office directed her Majesty's Minister at Buenos Ayres to press the mediation of Great Britain on that Government, with a view of putting an end to the hostilities then carried on. That offer was refused, though it had been earnestly sought by the opposite party at Monte Video. In the following year, he (Lord Aberdeen) thought an opportunity had arisen, when, by the united proposal of England and France to mediate between the parties,

there appeared some prospect of attaining that object. That joint mediation was strongly urged on the contending parties, and was accepted readily by the Monte Videans, but it was again rejected by the Buenos Ayreans. That was in the autumn of 1842. The Government of Buenos Ayres was then told, that though we acquiesced in that decision, yet it was impossible for us indefinitely to permit a sanguinary warfare of this kind to continue, and the interests of British commerce to be continually interrupted and impeded. For two years following, however, Her Majesty's Government took no step in this matter. The war continued, and its horrors increased daily, as well as the injury to British commerce. Not a month passed in which he (Lord Aberdeen) was not attacked in every quarter as guilty of the most culpable apathy and indifference to British commerce, and neglect of British interests. Petitions were presented to both Houses of Parliament on this subject. Still, however, he felt that it required strong grounds to interfere with the free exercise of power by an independent State, even when that power was employed in a manner so senseless and barbarous. As the Buenos Ayreans, however, persevered in their course, at the end of two years representations came to Her Majesty's Government from all quarters on this subject, and at last also from the Government of Brazil. The noble Lord seemed to think that that Government went out of its sphere in interfering at all in the matter; but it was a neighbouring Power interested in the tranquillity of the River Plate, and preventing the peace of its frontier provinces from being disturbed or threatened by these hostilities; and it was moreover a party to the Convention of August, 1828—the Government of Brazil urging on the Cabinets of London and Paris, through the Viscount D'Abrantes, the necessity of a prompt and effective interference in order to put an end to the war. Under these circumstances, the Governments of England and France, having concerted together, determined to offer mediation a third time, for the purpose of effecting pacification in that part of the world; and, if that offer were refused, to attempt by coercive measures to attain that object. Accordingly, there was a special mission on the part of this country and of France. The instructions sent to Her Majesty's Minister had been laid on their Lordships' Table, and those sent to the French Minister, which were strictly analogous, were in like manner laid before the French Chambers. They appeared to him (Lord Aberdeen) to express no hostile views against General Rosas, or Buenos Ayres. On the contrary, nothing could be more clear than the spirit of impartiality which pervaded the whole course adopted by England and France throughout the transactions. Every means was employed to induce the Government of Buenos Ayres to accept the offer of mediation, but they again refused to adopt any proposal until they had annihilated, as they said, those "sanguinary Unitarians." The Government of Buenos Ayres, as appeared by the papers published by them, were evidently misled by the reports of their agents. They thought that the union of England and France in this matter was not sincere—that the two countries distrusted each other—and that they had separate objects in view—and much art was employed to sow misunderstanding and dissension between them. But the Government of Buenos Ayres must at length have discovered that England and France were united in this object in a manner perfectly disinterested, and that their only motive was to establish peace in these countries which had been so long desolated by this cruel warfare. The Government of Buenos Ayres were also misled by the unauthorized interference of the Agent of the United States, the Government of which, however, had since explained its policy, and disavowed the whole of his proceeding. The object of this interference on the part of England and France was very simple. It was peace, and peace alone, preserving the independent existence of the Republic of Uruguay. It was true that, as the noble Lord says, we were not parties to the Convention which established the State of Uruguay, and this country had not guaranteed the independent existence of that republic; yet that State was created under our mediation, and therefore it was impossible for us to be indifferent to its destruction. The same was the case with the French Government; which in making peace with the Buenos Ayrean Government in 1840, not only recognised but secured the independent existence of Uruguay. It was, therefore, impossible to allow Rosas to become possessed of both sides of the River Plate, as he would had no interference taken place. With respect to General Oribe, there was no objection, on the part of this country, to his election as president of the Republic of Uruguay, if such was the

will of the people; and there was no intention to support General Riviera or any one else. If, therefore, General Oribe had the whole country with him, let him send away the troops of General Rosas, and be elected President of Uruguay. To this there would be no objection on the part of England and France. But at present General Oribe was the lieutenant of Rosas, commanding the latter's troops, and forced on the country at the head of the Argentine army. As long as this was the case, it was ludicrous to talk of the independence of the Republic of Uruguay. He would now say a word in reference to what had fallen from the noble Lord with respect to the opening of the tributary river of Parana. That, no doubt, was a great object; and, some day or other, he hoped that it would be accomplished lawfully and peaceably; but, on this subject, he had only to repeat the sentiment he had already expressed in that House, that we could not pretend to exercise any right of navigation with repect to the river Parana, both banks of which were within the Argentine Republic. To do so would be contrary to constant practice and the principles of nations. What might happen if peace were not established, and events should take an unfortunate turn, was another question; but, at present, they were negotiating with this State, with which they were not at war. It was true that a blockade of Buenos Ayres had been established; but that act, though approaching to a condition of hostilities, was not necessarily a state of war. This country was not at war with Buenos Ayres; and he trusted that it would continue in peace with that State, and that it would not be long before their mutual relations were re-established. Very recently General Rosas had made fresh proposals, which, though not in their present state admissible, might possibly lead to an amicable adjustment. Under these circumstances, he trusted that the noble Lord would not think proper to press for Papers, the production of which could not contribute to any such end, but might prove exceedingly michievous. He (Lord Aberdeen) hoped that the noble Lord would comprehend the discretion which prevented him from entering into a description of the character of the Buenos Ayrean Government, and of the person at its head. He thought that it would be unbecoming in him were he to do anything which could militate against that hope which he entertained of living in peace and terms of friendship with that State, as had been the case for so many years. If the Government of that State could only bring themselves to entertain the same love of peace as animated the Government of England, and ought to animate all mankind, there would not be the reason which existed at present to complain of their conduct. He trusted that the noble Lord would not, under the circumstances, press for the production of the Papers.

Lord COLCHESTER, having in the course of his public duty visited the countries under discussion, and having been personally acquainted with some of the individuals named in the debate, wished to address a few observations to the House. He perfectly concurred in the objects of the noble Earl (Aberdeen) as stated in his instructions to Mr. Ouseley, viz., to effect a cessation of hostilities between the two parties in the River Plate, and to secure peace throughout the State of Uruguay; but he feared the means adopted were not those best calculated to effect the purpose. The noble Earl stated, that the war carried on by the Government of Buenos Ayres was one without any national object; but this appeared to him (Lord Colchester) to be a misapprehension. In 1828, when General Rosas forced General Lavalle and the other chiefs of the Unitarian party to exile themselves from Buenos Ayres, they took refuge in the State of Uruguay, and from that time to the present had carried on a war from thence against the Government of Buenos Ayres whenever any chance of success offered itself. It was therefore an object of great importance to the security of the Government of Buenos Ayres to have in the Republic of Uruguay, not a dependent, but a friendly State. Such was their object in assisting General Oribe to recover his authority in that State; and he (Lord Colchester) did not apprehend any danger to the independence of the Republic of Uruguay from the restoration of General Oribe, as it was owing to his wish to maintain that independence that he had lost his office as President of that Republic. When France, in the year 1838, in prosecution of certain claims against Buenos Ayres, established a blockade of that port, her officers were desirous of using the port of Mont Video for the purpose of condemning and selling their prizes: this General Oribe resisted as involving him in a breach of neutrality. In consequence a revolution was got up, and Oribe was deposed; and in a public document he accused the French Consul

of being a party to the plot. Oribe then retired to Buenos Ayres, and his successor, General Riveira, agreed to all the wishes of the French, and joined them in the war against Buenos Ayres. In 1840 the state of public affairs in Europe induced the French to come to terms with Buenos Ayres, and their forces quitted the River Plate. Riveira still continued the war, but was defeated in several actions; and Oribe, with the assistance of a Buenos Ayrean army, re-entered the Republic of Uruguay, and succeeded in gaining possession of all the open country, and invested the city of Monte Video by land, while a Buenos Ayrean fleet blockaded it by sea; and if France and England had not interfered, it must in all probability have soon fallen. The defence of the city of Monte Video had been represented as showing the feeling of the people of the Republic of Uruguay against the return of General Oribe; but how was this population composed? Of about 24,000 inhabitants, there were, according to Mr. Mallalieu, 5,500 natives, and immigrants from Spain; 1,000 Unitarian refugees from Buenos Ayres; and the remaining 17,000 French and Italians; and these foreigners were not merely peaceful merchants and traders, for out of the armed force of 5,000, 3,000 were French and Italians. The natives, therefore, did not constitute more than one-fourth of the population of the city, which in point of fact was in the hands of foreigners. Now with respect to the joint interference of France and England, it was doubtless advantageous to the tranquillity of Europe when these two great countries could act in concert on questions of general policy; but in this particular case he (Lord Colchester) feared that the conduct of French agents and French subjects had disqualified France from holding the character of an impartial mediator. The original deposition of General Oribe was to serve French interests; French subjects had enrolled themselves in considerable force to oppose his return; and when at length summoned by the French Government to lay down their arms, they did so only in appearance, to resume them immediately under the flag of Monte Video. He (Lord Colchester) feared, the interference of France, under these circumstances, not likely to be favourably viewed by Buenos Ayres. He was glad to hear the statement made by the noble Earl (Aberdeen) of the present views of Her Majesty's Government towards General Oribe, and trusted that when they became generally known they would tend much towards an amicable settlement of the question, as they appeared so much more just to that individual than those contained in the instructions to Mr. Ouseley. The noble Earl had stated as another reason for our interference, the injury done to our commerce by this war in the River Plate. He (Lord Colchester) believed this interruption had not extended beyond the single port of Monte Video; and though we had now re-opened that traffic, had we not produced a much greater interruption to our commerce by our own blockade of the port of Buenos Ayres? The noble Earl had spoken of this blockade as the only act of coercion used by us towards Buenos Ayres; but had we not heard of actual hostilities in the River Parana? Had not blood been shed there? and, considering the haughty spirit of the Spanish race, might they not find themselves involved in a long and expensive contest? Buenos Ayres was protected by its shoals from an attack by ships; and even should they land forces to take the city, fatal experience had shown them that gallantry alone might not ensure success in such an operation. The character of General Rosas having been alluded to in the debate, he (Lord Colchester) would state that Rosas was a gentleman of old family and large landed possessions, who had taken little share in public affairs till after the murder of Governor Dorrego in 1828, when he was summoned to place himself at the head of the Federal party against General Lavalle and his adherents, and succeeded in driving them out of the republic. When he (Lord Colchester) was in the River Plate in 1830 and 1831, he could state that General Rosas had not been guilty of any of those cruelties since attributed to him: of what might have since occurred he could not state anything of his own knowledge; and seeing the conduct of Spaniards towards each other during the civil wars in the mother country, he feared there might be truth in some of the acts imputed to Rosas; but he firmly believed that many were altogether untrue, and more exaggerated, or performed by those who, nominally under his orders, were not really under his control; and that the character of General Rosas would hereafter stand as high as that of many of those among his countrymen who enjoyed great reputation, though their otherwise fair fame had been tarnished by unjustifi-

able severities, or cruel retaliations on their opponents.

LORD BEAUMONT expressed great satisfaction with the speech just made by the noble Earl. The observations he had made with regard to the prospects of peace, and the final settlement of the question, would do very great good when they became known in that quarter of the world. The body of strangers referred to by his noble Friend had, according to the last information which he (Lord Beaumont) had received, not laid down their arms. He had been furnished with a list of the regiments, and could produce documents showing they were all European settlers ; and therefore, until the foreign residents were forced to become neutral, the noble Earl could not expect Oribe to dismiss his auxiliaries. He should not, however, press his Motion.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON : I must ask the noble Lord one question. He stated that General Oribe was the first President: —now, I beg the noble Lord's pardon ; to my certain knowledge General Riveira was the first President. Therefore, there may be two claimants to that office.

LORD BEAUMONT would answer the noble Duke's question. General Riveira had served his time as President, and there was a new election for the Presidency. Oribe was elected according to the form prescribed. The duration of the office was limited the same as in the States of America. He had not fulfilled the time which, according to the Constitution, he was entitled to hold the Presidency, when, by means of the French intervention, a party was raised under General Riveira and General Lavalle, which upset the Presidency of General Oribe. He then took refuge within Buenos Ayres, with the intention of recovering his lost authority. They followed him to Buenos Ayres, and undoubtedly assisted to carry war to the very gates of that city; and it was in the retreat from that place that General Lavalle lost his life.

The Motion was then by leave withdrawn.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Thursday, February 19, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW MEMBERS SWORN. For Selkirk, Allan Eliott Lockhart, Esq.; for Cashel, Timothy O'Brien, Esq.

PUBLIC BILLS.—2°· Burghs (Scotland).

3°· and passed. County Works Presentments (Ireland); Drainage, &c. (Ireland).

PETITIONS PRESENTED, By Mr. Thomas Duncombe, from Members of the Natoinal Association, High Holborn, for the Adoption of Universal Suffrage.—By Mr. Broadwood, from Inhabitants of the Borough of Bridgewater, for better Observance of the Lord's Day. —By several hon. Members, from a great number of places, against Diminishing Protection to Agriculture.—By several hon. Members, from various places, in favour of a Total and Immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By several hon. Members, from a great number of places, against, and by Mr. G. Cavendish, and Mr. Evans, from various places, in favour, of the proposed Measure respecting Customs and Corn Importation. —By Lord George Bentinck, from Operative Broad Silk Handloom Weavers, of Spitalfields, against Alteration of Duties on Silk.—By Mr. Broadwood, from Merchants and Traders of Bridgewater, for Reduction of Duty on Tobacco.—By the Lord Advocate, from the Incorporation of Weavers, Dyers, and Clothdressers, of Canongate, in favour of Burghs (Scotland) Bill.—From Guardians of the Poor of the West London Union, against Exempting any Parties from the Metropolitan District Asylums.—By Mr. O'Connell, from Constables in the late City of Dublin Police Force, for Compensation.—By Mr. Cowper and Mr. Sharman Crawford, from various places, in favour of Limiting the Hours of Labour of Children and Young Persons employed in Factories to Ten.—By Mr. Sharman Crawford, from Tillicoultry and Heywood, and by Colonel Fox, from Poplar, for Remission of Sentence upon Frost, Williams, and Jones.—By Mr. Broadwood, Mr. Brotherton, Mr. Gisborne, Mr. Langston, Mr. Villiers, and Mr. Blackburne, from various places, against Enrolment of the Militia.—By Mr. Redington, from Guardians and Ratepayers of the New Ross Electoral Division of the New Ross Poor Law Union, for Alteration in the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act.—By Mr. Chute, from Rector, Owners, and Occupiers of Lands and Houses, in Great Cressingham, against Alteration in the Law of Settlement.—By Mr. Cumming Bruce, from the Presbytery of Strathbogie, against Licensing Toll Houses (Scotland) for the Sale of Spirituous Liquors.—By Sir Henry Smyth, from Inhabitants of Colchester, for referring Foreign Disputes to Arbitration.

LAW OF SETTLEMENT.

MR. WODEHOUSE said, he had given notice on Tuesday, that he would put a question to the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury, which, however, he believed ought to be put to the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The question was, whether it were the intention of Her Majesty's Government to introduce the Bill for an alteration in the Law of Settlement at such a period of the Session, and at such a stage of the discussion now pending, as to enable Parliament to form a judgment as to the advantages or disadvantages of the proposed change in a matter of such immense importance to millions of the lowest and poorest of Her Majesty's subjects, under all the various liabilities in which the industry of the three kingdoms was at present placed?

SIR J. GRAHAM : I have to state that the Bill to which my hon. Friend refers is already prepared and drawn, and that I shall be ready at an early period to lay it on the Table of this House. I beg to add, however, that it is not my intention to press that measure forward, or bring on a

general discussion upon it, until the Bill relative to the proposed relaxation or remission of all obstructions on the importation of articles of food into this country shall have passed this House.

MR. TOLLEMACHE wished to know whether in the Bill referred to it was intended to provide, that in the case of a man who could prove five years' industrial residence, his wife and family were to be allowed to follow the same settlement?

SIR J. GRAHAM: With all respect for the hon. Member I beg to decline entering into any particulars respecting the provisions of the Bill until it shall have been laid on the Table of the House.

INTERFERENCE OF PEERS IN ELECTIONS.

MR. COLLETT said, before offering to the House the few observations with which he should trouble it, he had to move that the Clerk at the Table should read the Standing Order embodied in the Motion of which he had given notice. Sessional Resolutions respecting Interference of Peers at Elections read, as follows:—

"Resolved—That no Peer of this Realm, except such Peers of Ireland as shall for the time being be actually elected, and shall not have declined to serve, for any county, city, or borough of Great Britain, hath any right to give his vote in the Election of any Member to serve in Parliament.

"That it is a high infringement of the liberties and privileges of the Commons of the United Kingdom, for any Lord of Parliament, or other Peer or Prelate, not being a Peer of Ireland at the time elected, and not having declined to serve for any county, city, or borough of Great Britain, to concern himself in the Election of Members to serve for the Commons in Parliament, except only any Peer of Ireland, at such Elections in Great Britain respectively, where such Peer shall appear as a Candidate, or by himself, or any others, be proposed to be elected; or for any Lord Lieutenant or Governor of any county to avail himself of any authority derived from his Commission, to influence the Election of any Member to serve for the Commons in Parliament."

MR. COLLETT then proceeded to say, that if on general occasions he was an advocate for short speeches, and for the propriety of Members not intruding longer than was necessary on the time of the House, he was sure that the present was not an occasion on which he should have either necessity or disposition to depart from so wholesome and so much to be encouraged a line of conduct. The task which he had undertaken he should much prefer to have fallen into abler and more experienced hands than his own—into those, for instance, of his hon. Friend the Member for Finsbury (Mr. Duncombe); but, as he had given no notice on the subject, as the crisis was urgent, and the occasion opportune—as infringements on the liberties and privileges of the Commons of England had of late been too frequent—as the interference of Lords of Parliament in bringing about vacations of Members, as well as elections of Members, had been too common, too open, too monstrous, and too notorious to be longer submitted to with impunity—he in default of a better man, considered it his public duty to call the attention of the House to the late infringements on its laws, its liberties, and its Standing Orders. The task which he had laid out for himself seemed to him neither difficult nor complicated. He did not intend to point out the deficiencies of the law, and to propose to remedy them by further legislation; on the contrary, he took and availed himself of the law as it was. He had commenced by calling their attention to the present state of it by getting the Clerk to read their Standing Order, recorded in the Journals of the 23rd of January last. He then, in his place in Parliament, stated his belief that this Standing Order had been infringed by four Lords of Parliament, whom he should mention to the House by name, and he should conclude by moving for a Committee of Privileges to investigate the circumstances, and to report to the House the result of their investigations. Under these circumstances he should leave to others to point out the defects and short workings of the Reform Bill—how the country was mocked and disappointed at not having obtained that which it had a right to—a full, fair, and free representation of the people, as promised by the noble Lord the Member for the city of London. Others would, he trusted, demand, before long, on the part of an outraged nation a remedy for abuses so little in accordance with the spirit and with the requirements of the age. He could not, however, help alluding to an argument so frequently in unreformed Parliaments brought forward in defence of this, even then, hardly to be tolerated system of rotten boroughs. It was this—that a few of those rotten, or, to use a more polite word, nomination boroughs, were supposed necessary for the purpose of securing seats in that House for men distinguished for ability and talents, but not rich enough to bear the expenses of contested elections, or of providing occasional seats for Members of the Government without local interest, whom it might

be desirable to place there to explain and carry out such measures as might be considered of public benefit and importance. [The Speaker : The hon. Member must not read his speech.] The system was bad, but some might say, and more might think, it had its advantages. He could not say he was among the number of its admirers. In his youth he was instructed never to do evil to bring about good; and if it was not right by a bad system to return good and efficient Members of Parliament, how much less right must it be by a bad system not only to return inefficient Members of Parliament, but by that bad system to turn out of that House Ministers of the Crown, and good and efficient Members of Parliament? Her Majesty had been pleased to promote to an office of great trust and responsibility, no less than to that of the Secretaryship of Colonial Affairs, a Gentleman of great, known, and acknowledged talent and ability—one who had always been an ornament to that House—and one whose assistance would at that moment be so useful to the country, and to the right hon. Baronet in the great and enlightened measure for which humanity was indebted to him, and of which measure he might look for his (Mr. Collett's) sincere and cordial support—without taunt and without boast—for he was of no party, in or out of that House; his sole wish and object was to have good measures, by which to advance and to improve the liberties and the condition of the lower and of the middle classes, now so ground down and oppressed by those in possession of riches, power, and authority :—

> "Merciful Heaven!
> Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
> Split'st the unwedgable and gnarled oak
> Than the soft myrtle; but man, proud man—
> Drest in a little brief authority—
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep."

He asked the House and the country why they were deprived of the presence of that right hon. Gentleman? What had he done to forfeit the good opinion of the electors of Newark, whom he had efficiently served, and with whom he had been apparently on good terms during a period of fifteen years? Why did he not at least come forward as a candidate at the late election for Newark? Echo, and the voice of an outraged country replied, "The right hon. William Ewart Gladstone does not again come forward as a candidate for the representation of Newark, because he has joined the Government of the right hon. Baronet, and because the present politics of the right hon. Baronet are not the politics of Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham Clinton, Duke of Newcastle-under-Line; ergo, it will be useless for the right hon. W. E. Gladstone to offer himself in opposition to the wishes of the Duke, whose agent is instructed to look out for a candidate more tractable and of a more proper way of thinking." Nearly the same occurrence had taken place in reference to the seats for Buckingham and Chichester, with this slight variation—that instead of having vacated their seats by fresh appointments, the late occupiers were both of them, on the 3rd instant, obliged to retire, because their Graces of Buckingham and Richmond, being of the same way of thinking as another noble Duke, already more than once alluded to, thought proper to require these vacations, and to appoint as Members for Chichester and Buckingham two inexperienced youths to oppose, on account of their nominators, the measures of the right hon. Baronet. The loss of the services of Sir Thomas Fremantle seemed to him almost irreparable at the present moment; because, having for some time been Irish Secretary, to him had been intrusted the management of several Bills relative to Ireland, all of which were introduced by the late Member for Buckingham; but which were now of necessity intrusted to other hands, because such was the decree, and the will and pleasure of his Grace the Duke and Marquess of Buckingham and Chandos. With these prefatory observations he should now call the attention of the House, first, to the present and past state of the law on the subject of the interference of Lords of Parliament; secondly, to cases and precedents on the subject; and thirdly, to those four boroughs, Chichester, Newark, Woodstock, and Buckingham, in the vacation and elections of which four Lords of Parliament, whom he should name, had concerned themselves. He should then read against each of these Lords a written statement of his charges; and lastly, he should hand in those written charges, and conclude by proposing the Committee of Privileges of which he had given notice. First, with regard to the state of the law: it appeared that the House on the 10th of December, 1641, came to the following Resolution :—

> "Whereas, the House of Commons has received information that letters from Peers are directed to boroughs that now are to make elections of Members to serve in this Parliament, they conceive that

all letters of that nature from any Peers of this realm do necessarily tend to the violation of the privileges of Parliament and the freedom of the elections of the Members that ought to serve in the House of Commons; and do declare that, notwithstanding such letters, all persons to whom elections of knights and burgesses do belong, ought to proceed to their elections with that freedom which, by the laws of the realm and of right, they ought to do; and do expect that if any such letters from Peers of the realm shall hereafter be sent unto them, that the parties receiving the same shall certify the contents thereof, or bring the letters themselves to the Speaker of the House of Commons."

Again, on the 14th of December, 1699, in consequence of the Earl of Manchester having voted at an election for Maldon, the House of Commons resolved *nem. con.*—

"That no Peer of this kingdom hath any right to give his vote at the election for any Member to serve in Parliament."

And this Resolution was repeated at the beginning of every Session, until the Union of Great Britain with Ireland. The following Resolution was passed by the House on the 15th of February, 1700, on a representation of an interference by a Peer at an election for the borough of Huntingdon:—

"That for any Peer of this kingdom, or any Lord Lieutenant of any county, to concern themselves in the elections of Members to serve for the Commons in Parliament, is a high infringement of the liberties and privileges of the Commons of England."

And this Resolution was made a Standing Order on the 27th of April, 1702. After the Union of the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland it became necessary to make some alterations in the Standing Orders of the House; and on the 30th of October, 1801, some Motions being made respecting the voting and interfering of Peers at elections, the debate was adjourned, and a Committee appointed to report. On the 17th of November, 1801, the Committee reported several Resolutions, which afterwards, on the 27th of April, 1802, were adopted and made Standing Orders of the House, and, as such, had been repeated at the beginning of every subsequent Session. He now came to the precedents. The first occurred in 1701, on the 29th of January, when the Earl of Peterborough having been mentioned in the evidence given at the bar in the Malmesbury election, and his Lordship desiring to be heard, it was resolved—

"That the Earl of Peterborough be admitted and heard."

Whereupon his Lordship came in, reposed himself a little while covered, and then stood up uncovered, and was heard, and withdrew. The question was proposed—

"That Charles, Earl of Peterborough, is guilty of many indirect practices in endeavouring to procure Daniel Part to be elected a burgess for Malmesbury, in the county of Wilts."

On a division the numbers were—Ayes 141; Noes 56. So it was resolved in the affirmative. The next case was Sir J. Pakington's charge against the Bishop of Worcester and his Secretary. Sir J. Pakington (ancestor of the hon. Member for Droitwitch) stated to the House this:—

"That the Bishop of Worcester sent for me to desist from standing for knight of the county, and to threaten, if I would not desist, to speak against me to his clergy. Secondly, he sent letters himself, and his secretary sent others, to the clergy, with directions to make what interest they could against me in their parishes; and where they could not prevail to vote for other candidates to desire them to stay at home; and in order to this the bishop sent copies of the poll of their respective parishes. Thirdly, he aspersed me to his clergy, branding me and my ancestors with vices, and at confirmation and visitation desired his clergy to vote against me, as unfit to serve in Parliament, and threatened them with displeasure if they did not vote against me. Fourthly, aspersed me and my ancestors to several of the laity, his tenants, and threatened if they did not vote against me never to renew any estate under him, and that he would set such marks upon them that his successors should not suffer them or their children to renew any more. Fifthly, Mr. Lloyd, the bishop's son, aspersed me and gave scandalous characters of me to several freeholders whom he solicited to vote against me, and told them I voted for bringing in a French Government. Sixthly, the bishop's secretary aspersed me to several freeholders in like manner, representing me as unfit to sit in the House, threatening them with the bishop's displeasure, and said they might as well vote for the Prince of Wales as for me."

It was resolved *nem. con.* by the House that Sir J. Pakington had made out his charge against the bishop and his son, and that—

"The proceedings of the said bishop and his son and agents in order to hinder the election of a Member for the county of Worcester have been malicious, unchristian, and arbitrary, and in high violation of the liberties and privileges of the Commons of England."

And it was further resolved that Her Majesty (Queen Anne) should be addressed to remove the bishop from his office of Lord Almoner to the Queen, and that the Attorney General should prosecute him. In 1710, on the 14th of March, after an inquiry, it was resolved—

"That it appears to this House that William Lord Bishop of Carlisle hath dispersed several copies of a letter pretended to have been received from Sir James Montague, in order to procure Sir James to be elected for Carlisle, and by concerning himself in the said election has highly in-

fringed the liberties and privileges of the Commons of Great Britain."

The House had divided, when there appeared—Ayes 156, Noes 136; and it was resolved in the affirmative. On the 2nd of February, 1780, it was in like manner resolved—

"That it appears to this Committee that James Bridges, Duke of Chandos, a Peer of Parliament, and Lord Lieutenant of the county of Southampton, has concerned himself in an election of knight of the shire for the said county."

Also—

"That it is the opinion of this Committee that James Bridges, Duke of Chandos, Peer of Parliament, &c., has been guilty of a breach of the privileges of this House, and an infringement of the liberties and privileges of the Commons of Great Britain."

In 1779, on the 10th of December, complaint being made to the House that the Duke of Chandos, a Peer of Parliament, and Lord Lieutenant of the county of Southampton, had signed a letter with his own hand respecting the ensuing election for the said county, thereby concerning himself in the said election, in breach of the privileges of that House, and in infringement of the liberties and privileges of the Commons of Great Britain, it was resolved *nem. con.*—

"That it be referred to the consideration of the Committee of Privileges to examine the matter of the said complaint, and to report the same, with their opinion thereon, to the House."

Exactly the same complaint having been made respecting the Duke of Bolton, it was also referred to a Committee; as was another complaint respecting the Duke of Chandos, that he had signed several letters with his own hand respecting the election for the county of Southampton, thereby influencing the same election. Again, in 1813, on the 24th of March, a Committee having been appointed to try the Helston election petition, resolved—

"That it appears to this Committee that an illegal agreement has for some time existed between the most noble George Frederick, Duke of Leeds, and the greater part of the members of the corporation of the borough of Helston, in relation to the return of Members to serve in the Commons, &c., for the said borough, in violation of the freedom of election, and contrary to the Standing Orders of this House, and the laws of this realm, for the prevention of bribery and corruption."

It was moved—

"That Mr. Attorney-General do forthwith prosecute George Frederick, Duke of Leeds, for his said offence;"—

but the Motion was lost on a division: Ayes 52; Noes 55. Afterwards, on the same day, leave was given to bring in a Bill to secure the freedom and purity of election in the borough of Helston. This Bill passed the Commons in 1813, 1814, and 1815, but was lost each year in the House of Lords. In 1819, on the 1st of April, the Camelford Election Committee reported that John Chapman, a witness, had given false evidence, and that the Committee had committed him to the custody of the Serjeant at Arms. It was ordered that John Chapman be, for his said offence, committed to Newgate. The real offence of John Chapman, he understood, was his having stated that he had received from a Peer some letters to influence the election of Camelford, which letters he could not or did not prove to be in the handwriting of the Peer. The Peer, therefore, was screened; and, the butt, John Chapman, underwent the farce of being sent to Newgate for having "given false evidence." This John Chapman was underfactor and agent of the Peer whose authority he pretended to have. He would now proceed to mention to the House some particulars relate to the four boroughs referred to in the notice he had given. He would begin with Chichester. On referring to a little book he held in his hand, called *Dodd's Parliamentary Companion for* 1846, which was a Parliamentary authority: on turning to page 101, he found it there stated, openly and unreservedly, "The interest of the Duke of Richmond preponderates in this borough." Now, on looking at the Members elected at the general election, he found them to have been (without opposition, of course) Lord Arthur Lennox and Mr. John Abel Smith. With Mr. John Abel Smith he did not intend to have anything whatever to do, because, however his election might have been brought about, he had no foundation for asserting, much less was he able to prove, that a "Lord of Parliament" had anything whatever to do with it. The election of Lord Arthur Lennox in 1841, was, however, he had good reason to believe, brought about by the "concernment" of a "Lord of Parliament" living somewhere in the neighbourhood; but of this 1841 election he should take no further notice on the present occasion. The next election for Chichester was in the autumn of last year, when Lord Arthur Lennox having been—no doubt in consideration of his talents and abilities—promoted to a clerkship of the Ordnance, his Lordship was re-elected without opposition. But whether this re-elec-

tion was or was not brought about by the "concernment" of a "Lord of Parliament," he said not. All that he said was, that in the Journals of that House, on its meeting on the 22nd of January, was the following entry:—"New Member sworn —Lord Arthur Lennox, for Chichester." Now, this having taken place on the 22nd of January, one would suppose that, for a time at least, this noble Lord, who had deserved so well, would have been allowed to retain quiet possession of his seat; on the contrary, he found that on the 3rd of February another vacancy arose in the representation of Chichester, the reasons for which, as well as the subsequent and consequent election, were, he believed, accurately described in the following newspaper statements:—

"The Premier and his Subordinates.—Lord Arthur Lennox resigned his seat for Chichester at the request of his brother, the Duke of Richmond, in consequence of having expressed his determination to vote for the alteration of the Corn Laws, and ultimately for their total repeal. When Lord Arthur Lennox acquainted Sir Robert Peel with the position he was placed in by the Duke of Richmond's request, he tendered his resignation of Clerk of the Ordnance, which Sir Robert Peel refused to accept, observing, 'that it was quite enough to forfeit his seat in the House of Commons without giving up his situation, and begged that he would attend to the duties of his office, and that he (Sir Robert Peel) would move the Ordnance Estimates in the House of Commons.' This act of kindness is highly commended by all parties."

"Chichester Election.—This miserable farce was enacted on Tuesday. Chichester is a cathedral town, and is completely under the influence of the Duke of Richmond; it was not, therefore, surprising if Lord Henry Lennox, the Duke's second son, should walk over the course. This young sprig of nobility is about as well adapted for a teacher of the Chinese language as for a legislator; and Chichester disgraces itself by allowing the Duke thus to dispose of its representation."

Which he verily and sincerely believed; at any rate, that the Duke of Richmond was "concerned" both in the late vacation and in the late election. With respect to Chichester, he (Mr Collett) now stated, in his place in Parliament, that he verily believed that the liberties and privileges of the Commons of the United Kingdom had been infringed by Charles Gordon Lennox, Duke of Richmond, a Lord of Parliament, having concerned himself in bringing about first the vacation of his seat in this House by the late Representative for Chichester, Lord Arthur Lennox; and secondly, the return for Chichester of one of its present Members, Lord George Charles Henry Gordon Lennox, all of which he verily believed, if the Committee he asked for were granted, he should be able to prove. He would now go to Newark. On again referring to *Dodd's Parliamentary Companion*, page 117, he found it stated openly and unreservedly, "The Duke of Newcastle has considerable influence here." In 1841 the Members returned were Lord John Manners and Mr. William Ewart Gladstone, which state of things continued up to the meeting of that House on the 22nd of January last, when a new writ was moved for Newark, "in the room of the right hon. William Ewart Gladstone, Secretary of State;" but, as he had asked before, why had not this Gentleman again offered himself; and why was the present member elected? This was explained in an address he would now read, which appeared in the papers, and which, although satirical, was full of truth:—

TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE, K.G., G.C., &c. &c.

"We, the undersigned, free and independent electors of the borough of Newark, beg to approach your Grace with those feelings of awful respect, which become us when we venture to address your august person, and humbly to offer to your Grace our heartfelt thanks for your gracious consideration, in sending down to us as your Grace's Representative in Parliament, a Gentleman, and one to whose name our virtuous Lord Chancellor has been pleased to add the appendage of Q. C.

"We are quite aware, that if your Grace had thought fit to select your under-butler, or a helper in your stables, the same high distinction must have been his, through the same medium of our unbiassed suffrages; and we feel deeply grateful to your Grace, for the tender care of our feelings exhibited on this occasion.

"We have been in doubt whether to address your Grace in terms of congratulation or condolence, on the sudden disappearance of the Gentleman whom you were pleased to elect, and continue in office for thirteen years as our Representative. We have sought for him in the House of Commons, but not having found him there, and being unable, from certain difficulties of grammatical construction, and involutions of phrase, to ascertain from a letter signed 'W. E. Gladstone,' what are the religious, political, and economical principles of our late Representative, we refrain from saying, or even thinking, more upon the subject, till we receive your Grace's orders thereupon."

With respect to Newark, he stated in his place in Parliament, that he verily believed that the liberties and privileges of the Commons of the United Kingdom had been infringed by Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham Clinton, Duke of Newcastle-under-Line, a

Lord of Parliament, having concerned himself during the last vacancy, and at the last election in causing the right hon. William Ewart Gladstone to desist from again coming forward as a candidate for the representation of Newark; and he verily believed, that if the Committee were granted he should be able to prove it. He stated also in his place, in Parliament, that he verily believed that the liberties and privileges of the Commons of the United Kingdom had been infringed by Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham Clinton, Duke of Newcastle-under-Line, a Lord of Parliament, having concerned himself in bringing about the return for Newark of one of its present Members, Mr. John Stuart; and he verily believed, that if the Committee were granted, he should be able to prove it. He now proceeded to Woodstock, in which three elections had taken place during the last two years. On again referring to *Dodd's Parliamentary Companion*, page 131, he found it stated openly and unreservedly, "The Duke of Marlborough has influence here." Now, for this borough the hon. and learned Gentleman (now the Attorney General) was elected in 1841, by what influence he would not say; but he served as a faithful burgess till April, 1844, when promotion to the Solicitor Generalship vacated the seat. He did not, however, offer himself again, but the Marquess of Blandford was returned in his stead—how, why, and wherefore, the following newspaper statement would explain:—

"Upon the accession of the present Duke of Marlborough to the title in 1840, his grace, unsolicited, and of his own free will, tendered to the hon. Gentleman his interest in the borough, with a promise of undisturbed possession until the Marquess of Blandford should attain his majority. The Marquess came of age some eleven months ago, notwithstanding which Mr. Thesiger has never been called upon to fulfil his engagement. A vacancy occurring, by reason of the hon. Gentleman's appointment to the office of Solicitor General, the Marquess of Blandford naturally offers himself to fill the seat. Such proceedings, therefore, ought neither to have been unexpected by, nor a surprise, nor disappointment to Her Majesty's Government, or the hon. Gentleman himself."

This statement was believed to have been written by the Duke himself. The hon. and learned Gentleman had given, he understood, a very different account of the affair, and that he was "very hardly used by the Duke," &c.; but whether the hon. and learned Gentleman was used hardly or unjustly, the case was, he thought, established, that the Duke "concerned" himself in the election of 1844. He now came to the election in April, 1845, when the Marquess of Blandford was, at the dictation of the Duke of Marlborough, under the necessity of vacating his seat on account of the vote he had given on the Maynooth question, he being then informed by the Duke, that if he did not vacate his seat, "family and pecuniary arrangements might be disturbed." On this vacancy in April, 1845, was elected for the representation of Woodstock, entirely at the instigation of the Duke of Marlborough, in place of a son turned out, Viscount Loftus; but at, and during the whole time previous to his election, this young legislative nobleman was in the east of Europe, at such a distance from England that communication with him was impossible; in his absence, however, an election address was issued, in which pledges were given in his name, and of the contents of which it was impossible that he could have been cognizant. He now came to the last vacancy, on the occasion of Lord Loftus succeeding to a marquisate in December, 1845. When Mr. William Evetts proposed Lord Alfred Churchill in December, 1845, to the electors of Marlborough, he was credibly informed, and believed he should be able to prove, that, previous to the election, on this Mr. W. Evetts being solicited by Mr. B. Holloway, agent to the Duke of Marlborough, to propose Lord Alfred Churchill, Mr. Evetts was given to understand, that as a reward for so doing, his name would be inserted by the Duke as a magistrate in the commission of the peace for the county of Oxford: this much was certain, that shortly afterwards the said William Evetts was made by the Duke not only a magistrate, but a deputy-lieutenant of the county of Oxford; and that since the election his name had appeared in the *London Gazette* as deputy-lieutenant, for the county of Oxford. He was the last man to speak about rank or station; but still, to corroborate public opinion that the Duke of Marlborough had improperly and corruptly used the office of Lord Lieutenant for procuring his own ends and purposes, he might mention the common report in the neighbourhood of Woodstock, that although Mr. William Evetts was a respectable person, his standing in the country was not that from which gentlemen were usually selected to fill the office of deputy-lieutenant. After his election, and previous to the appointment, Mr. Evetts said to a gentleman

residing in Oxford, "The Duke is going to make me a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant." With respect to Woodstock, he (Mr. Collett) stated in his place, in Parliament, that he verily believed that the liberties and privileges of the Commons of the United Kingdom had been infringed by George Spencer Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, a Lord of Parliament, having concerned himself in bringing about—first, the return of the Marquess of Blandford as a Member for Woodstock, in April, 1844; second, the vacation of his seat in this House by the said Marquess of Blandford in April, 1845; third, the return of Viscount Loftus as a Member for Woodstock in April, 1845; fourth, the return of Lord Alfred Churchill as a Member for Woodstock in December, 1845; all of which he verily believed, if this Committee were granted, he should be able to prove. Buckingham finished his hopeful list. He again turned to *Dodd*, where at, page 99, he found it stated, openly and unreservedly, "The Duke of Buckingham has much influence in this borough." This borough so resembled the city of Chichester, that he should only refer to a return he held in his hand of Sir T. Fremantle having vacated his seat on the 3rd of February, 1846, and to another return, showing that the Marquess of Chandos was chosen for Buckingham on the 12th of February, 1846, in both of which, viz., the vacation and election, he (Mr. Collett) believed that the Duke of Buckingham was "concerned." He would only read the following:—

"Buckingham Borough Election.—This was another farce, the chief clown in which is a noble Duke. The Marquess of Chandos, son of the Duke of Buckingham, was elected on Wednesday without any opposition. The new representative is quite untried in political life, and, of course, knows no more of the affairs of the country than the ducal wisdom of his father has been able or willing to impart. It is monstrous that the aristocracy should thus be enabled to control the representation. But how did the farce end? Of course, with a kindred mummery. A car, trimmed with green, was prepared for his Lordship; and in that vehicle the new Member was carried round the town."

And then he should say, that with respect to Buckingham he would state in his place in Parliament, that he verily believed that the liberties and privileges of the Commons of the United Kingdom had been infringed by Richard Plantagenet Temple Nugent Bridges Chandos Grenville, Duke and Marquess of Buckingham and Chandos, a Lord of Parliament, having concerned himself in bringing about, first, the vacation of his seat in this House by the late Representative for Buckingham, the right hon. Sir Thomas Fremantle, Baronet; second, the return for Buckingham of one of its present Members, the Marquess of Chandos; all of which he verily believed, if this Committee were granted, he should be able to prove. And now that he had made these statements and these charges, which charges he had reduced to writing, and delivered in to the right hon. the Speaker, he considered that he had done his duty, and that the matter was in the hands of the House. Sure he was that, with such a Standing Order on its books, and with such charges so deliberately made in the face of the country, the House would not stultify itself so much as to allow these charges to be made with impunity; on the contrary, he felt satisfied that they would receive the desired investigation. He concluded, therefore, by handing in these charges in writing, and by moving, as he had given notice, that they be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

[The following is the form in which the hon. Member's Complaint and Motion were entered on the Books of the House of Commons.]

"Complaint by a Member in his place, of the conduct of the Duke of Buckingham, a Lord of Parliament, for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the vacation of a seat in this House by the late Member for Buckingham, Sir Thomas Fremantle, and for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the election and return of the Marquis of Chandos for the said borough:

"Also complaint by the same Member of the conduct of the Duke of Richmond, a Lord of Parliament, for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the vacation of a seat in this House by Lord Arthur Lennox, late Member for Chichester, and for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the election and return of Lord George Charles Henry Gordon Lennox for the said city:

"Also complaint by the same Member of the conduct of the Duke of Newcastle, a Lord of Parliament, for having concerned himself, during the last vacancy, and at the last election, in causing the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone to desist from again coming forward as a candidate for the representation of Newark, and for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the election and return of John Stuart, esquire, for the said borough:

"Also complaint by the same Member of the conduct of the Duke of Marlborough, a Lord of Parliament, for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the election and return for Woodstock of the Marquis of Blandford, April 1844, and for having concerned himself in compassing and bringing about the vacation

of a seat in this House by the said Marquis of Blandford, April 1845:

"Also for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the election and return of Viscount Loftus for the said borough, April 1845:

"Also for having concerned himself in the compassing and bringing about the election and return of Lord Alfred Churchill for the said borough."

Motion made, and Question proposed—

"That it be referred to the Committee of Privileges, to inquire into the causes that led to the vacation of their Seats in this House by the Members lately representing in Parliament the city of Chichester and the boroughs of Newark, Woodstock, and Buckingham; also to make inquiries as to the Elections of the Members now representing in Parliament the said city and the said three boroughs, and to report whether or not in any, and if so in what cases, either as to vacation or election, the Resolution of this House, 'That it is a high infringement of the liberties and privileges of the Commons of the United Kingdom, for any Lord of Parliament, or other Peer or Prelate, not being a Peer of Ireland at the time elected, and not having declined to serve for any county, city, or borough of Great Britain, to concern himself in the Election of Members to serve for the Commons in Parliament, except only any Peer of Ireland, at such Elections in Great Britain respectively, where such Peer shall appear as a Candidate, or by himself, or any others, be proposed to be elected; or for any Lord Lieutenant or Governor of any county to avail himself of any authority derived from his Commission, to influence the Election of any Member to serve for the Commons in Parliament,' has been infringed upon."

MR. WILLIAMS said, that he had come down to the House not expecting to be called upon to speak, and still less to second the Motion of his hon. Friend. He had supposed that the noble Marquess (the Marquess of Chandos) the Member for Buckingham, or the noble Lord (Lord H. Lennox) the Member for Chichester, would have been eager to come forward to second the Motion for inquiry. They must be anxious that these grave charges should be investigated against other noble Dukes, and still more against their noble fathers. He had expected also, that some Member of Her Majesty's Government would have attempted some answer to a proposition of so much importance, involving a deep stain on the character of the House of Commons. When a similar Motion was made by the late Mr. Maddox, charging that the House of Commons was to a great extent elected by the corrupt and coercive influence of certain Peers, the Minister of the Crown, the late Lord Castlereagh, stood up in his place in front of the Treasury bench, and contended that such a Committee was totally needless on account of the notoriety of the fact, that under the old boroughmongering *regime* Members were returned by the interference of Peers; he boldly stated, that this fact was as indisputable as that the sun shone at noon-day. On the present occasion it seemed, that not a word was to be said by any Member of Government; and he (Mr. W. Williams) wished to know whether this silence was to be understood as an admission that Peers of Parliament did trample under their feet the most valuable privileges of the House, and the orders made to support them? Was it not, he asked, a stain and a taint on the character of the House of Commons, that Peers were allowed to send representatives into it to maintain their private interests, instead of attending to the general welfare of the nation? That was a charge which the House of Commons ought not to allow to be made without instant and searching inquiry. When, two or three years ago, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Roebuck) made a statement similar to that now brought forward; when he said, in his place, that he believed certain Members were returned by the grossest bribery and corruption of the electors, a Committee was appointed, and the facts were distinctly proved in each case. Nevertheless, no ulterior proceeding was instituted, because it was understood that the matter should be carried no farther against the individuals implicated by that inquiry. He had been informed and believed that there was a compromise, but he might be mistaken; if he were not mistaken, and there were no such understanding, then he must say that, in his opinion, the hon. Member for Bath stopped short of what he ought to have done after such disclosures. The charge against the noble Dukes on the present occasion exceeded that formerly made by Mr. Maddox; they were accused of having, by their influence and power, demanded of Members of the House of Commons that they should resign their seats, because those Members felt it their conscientious duty to support the measures introduced by Government, which measures they believed would be conducive to the public good. These measures, it seemed, were opposed to the private and selfish interests of the noble Dukes; and they therefore ordered the Members to resign their seats. The charge of the hon. Member for Athlone was, that they procured the return of Members to support their own selfish and mercenary ends, in opposition to the national interest; and surely, if true, it cast the deepest

stain of degradation on the House of Commons. He could not call to mind any accusation in boroughmongering times which involved matter more derogatory to the character of Parliament. He insisted that the House was bound to inquire, and he believed that the charge affected persons whose personal characters alone would have been able neither to secure votes nor return representatives. That was his opinion; but he meant to express it without conveying the slightest offence to the noble Dukes. It was a well-known fact, that it was not owing to their personal qualities, but to the weight of their great estates, that these Peers were enabled to influence the return of Members of Parliament. The question was particularly important at the present time, when Government had brought in a measure of great importance and national interest, which the Peers in question had sent their representatives to the House, if possible, to thwart and retard, in order that their own selfish interests might be promoted. He was surprised at the merriment with which such grave charges had been received by hon. Members opposite; but he held that the House could not refuse to inquire into these circumstances without surrendering their dignity and character. The motives which had influenced the Peers charged were notorious; and they and their representatives had heaped every species of gross and calumnious abuse on the right hon. Baronet, imputing to him the worst of motives for having brought forward measures by which they considered that their own selfish interests were attacked. It seemed that they were determined to make the people buy the commodity which they sold at as high prices as possible—determined to do all they could to prop up the obnoxious Corn Laws. He was quite convinced that such conduct would not be tolerated in the country. A call would shortly be made for the further reform of that House—for the introduction of a new schedule A. He thought that it was due to the House of Commons and to the noble Dukes implicated that the matter should not rest here, but should be either proved or disproved.

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, much of what has been introduced by the hon. Member who seconded the Motion, appears to me to have no proper bearing upon this question. I see no necessity for introducing into this debate the matter which has been tolerably well described in the debates of six preceding evenings—the question of the Corn Laws. I do not think it was fair in him to attempt to prevail upon the House to accede to the Motion, by raising a prejudice against any parties who may be concerned in the question, by imputing to them motives of a selfish and interested character, for their opposition to the Ministeral measure. And I must say, the hon. Gentleman completely mistakes my feelings if he thinks it possible that the course I shall feel it my duty to take, will be influenced, in the slightest degree, by the allegation he has made as to gross abuse having been heaped upon me. I am not aware of the fact that any such abuse as that to which he refers has been cast upon me. I am not aware of the imputations thrown upon me, of having been influenced, in proposing the measures referred to, by motives corrupt or interested. But I distinctly say, that, if I had been aware of the fact, no feeling of irritation under such imputations — knowing, as I must, that they would be utterly undeserved—would influence me in the slightest degree in the course I should take; and, therefore, I regret that the hon. Gentleman should have introduced these observations, and thus endeavoured to raise a prejudice against the parties referred to. The proper question for the House is, whether or not there be Parliamentary ground for instituting this inquiry. Now, to deny that Peers do exercise an influence upon elections would be perfectly absurd; and I hope the day will never come when the legitimate influence which they may exercise may be extinguished. But extinguish it, in fact, you cannot. Pass what laws you will — while the Constitution of England continues, and while the feeling of Englishmen remains what it is—you never can extinguish that legitimate influence of which I speak. Take the case, for instance, of a Peer of great property—the Lord Lieutenant of his county—having devoted his life to the performance of local duties—having been kind to the tenantry—having set an example of improvement in his neighbourhood—being at the head of the local society of his county, not by rules, but by character and station—to tell me that you can extinguish that legitimate influence to which I allude; why, it is out of the question. And God forbid that the day should ever arrive when the virtues of a Peer should not have their proper influence upon society! I do not, then, meet this question by denying the influ-

ence of Peers upon elections. I rejoice in the existence of it to that legitimate extent of which I am speaking. A legitimate influence will always exist, whether in Peers or Commoners, proportioned to their characters. You can never extinguish the respect which a tenantry will feel for a good landlord, whether Peer or Commoner, without any coercion on his part. However you may consider the influence "unparliamentary," the tenantry will respect his feelings as their landlord; and I will venture to say, that the less of coercion there exists—the less any attempt is made on the part of a highminded and virtuous man, to interfere with his tenantry's electoral privileges, the more desire will be displayed upon their part to consult his wishes—a desire, I repeat it, proportioned to the absence of all endeavour to coerce them. But the question in this case is, whether there be any evidence of the exercise of an illegitimate influence? The hon. Member refers to the cases brought forward by Mr. Maddox and by the learned Member for Bath (Mr. Roebuck), both of whom, however, had grounds for their proceedings which do not exist here. What are the grounds upon which the hon. Gentleman calls upon us to consent to this Committee? And the House should well consider, that if they are prepared on grounds of this description to appoint the Committee, there never will be wanting a demand for similar inquiries. The hon. Gentleman referred to what the hon. Member called a petition from the inhabitants of Newark, presented to a noble Duke, thanking him for having appointed a Gentleman their representative, whose name was distinguished by the addition of the letters "Q.C." Any one would have entertained the impression that the petition was a *bonâ fide* one. The hon. Gentleman did not state its origin; which, it was well known, was a fabrication—a mere fiction, appearing in a weekly newspaper, without any attempt to invest it with authenticity. Is the House prepared to institute an inquiry on such ground? If so, all I can say is, that we shall be much occupied in such matters. The hon. Gentlemen indeed said, solemnly, "I verily believe the truth of what I have stated." Sir, that is not, in my opinion, sufficient. He has not adduced a single fact, actual or plausible, on which he can found his Motion. He has not adduced one solitary act of interference. He has not adduced one particle of proof that there was conveyed to any of the late Members for the places mentioned, any intimation, direct or indirect, from any Peer, that their resignation was required, nor that any Peer induced any interference on the part of any constituent bodies. I did not hear the hon. Gentleman adduce one solitary fact to support his Motion. The hon. Gentleman, indeed, read extracts from newspapers. Now, without alluding to such paragraphs as are palpably and professedly fictitious—as the pretended petition referred to—really if you are to condemn a man upon what appears in the newspapers, God help him who may be subjected to such a species of censure! Sir, as to my right hon. Friend (Sir T. Fremantle) the late Secretary for Ireland, I regret that he should have felt it his duty to vacate his seat. I have had the fullest and freest communication with him upon the subject; and all that I can say is, that so far as I am aware, the sole cause which induced him to vacate his seat (for Buckingham) was a sensitive—perhaps, constitutionally, a too sensitive—feeling as to his private honour. I do not say whether it be right or wrong, in having been compelled to disappoint certain expectations, excited by certain assurances given at an election, on that account to vacate a seat. I have no right on my own part to question the propriety of such a course; for on one occasion I thought it my duty to afford to my constituents (of Oxford) such an opportunity of re-election. I think I was wrong. It is difficult, however, to resist the feelings which prompt a man in such circumstances. I blame no man for being swayed by such impulses. Speaking in a strict, perhaps a technical, constitutional sense, I must say, we are sent here as free agents and not as delegates, and that if we act on a sense of constitutional duty, we should always resist such applications to resign. But I can well fancy cases in which the sense of private honour overrules the strict principles of constitutional duty; and I should be the last man to blame any one for following similar impulses. My right hon. Friend, however, the Member for Buckingham, had pledged himself (perhaps unwisely) to maintain during the tenure of his seat the existing Corn Laws without alteration. His constituents assembled—I believe not at the solicitation of any Peer (but acting on their own feelings on the subject of the Corn Laws)—and called upon my right hon. Friend to vacate his seat, and thus redeem his pledge. It may be said, perhaps with justice—

that my right hon. Friend ought not to have given any such pledge—that he might have reserved the power of free action, declaring "I cannot give pledges as to any particular question. I must reserve to myself the full and free exercise of my discretion, and the liberty of acting on my own convictions. But my right hon. Friend has not taken such a course. He had given a specific pledge to sustain the existing Corn Laws; and, so far as I have any knowledge on the matter (and I have had the fullest and freest communication with him upon it), he yielded to his own feeling of honour, and to the sense of the great majority of his constituents, without their having been urged by any species of influence or intimidation. But I do not rest on that case alone. I say it is not right that Parliament should institute inquiries of this nature, without some positive proof —some tangible evidence of facts to support it. We cannot act on the mere statement by a Member that he believes something of what he has recently heard. At the same time I must say that in a case in which there was some direct proof of improper interference on the part of Peers, there might be no alternative but to institute an inquiry. But I do think that the less you institute inquiry into the free expression of public opinion in this country, the better. We live in an atmosphere of freedom. Peers have a right to express their own opinions in public, and in the presence of their tenantry to condemn the conduct of this or that Government; and if those who are dependent upon them, or who look up to them—hearing them holding such language—choose to follow them, I deprecate Parliamentary inquisition into the motives and intentions of those who may so have acted. Regardless of the questions raised by the hon. Gentleman, I shall pursue the same course now as I should have done if the Peers referred to had continued to honour me with their confidence; and thinking this to be a most dangerous proposition, and a most objectionable precedent, I shall give it my most determined opposition.

Mr. HUME observed, that the right hon. Baronet, while he admitted that Peers had interfered at elections, had stated that there was no objection to such interference. Why, then, he would ask, retain the Standing Order forbidding the practice? With respect to the present Motion, he must admit that the hon. Member for Athlone had not brought forward facts which it would be advisable that the House should have before them before entering on such an inquiry as he proposed: under these circumstances he hoped his hon. Friend would not press the question. Let him bring forward better evidence, and then he (Mr. Hume) would support him. It was too evident that the Reform Bill had failed in rooting out the influence of Peers in elections. Members were nominated by Peers now just as in the old boroughmongering days, but such instances as they lately had would compel the Government to interfere.

Mr. S. CRAWFORD thought he might expose himself to the charge of being indifferent to the subject, if he allowed it to pass without a word of comment. In his opinion the present question was an important one, for a charge had been brought by an hon. Member, involving the representatives of four constituencies. He had expected that some of the individuals alluded to would have rebutted the charge; but as none of them had done so, what was the House and the country to think of a charge which none of the Gentlemen implicated had attempted to disavow? The impression on his mind, and on that of the country would be, that the charges were well founded, or Gentlemen of character and high honour would have disavowed them. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had talked of the legitimate influence of Peers. He did not wish to abolish that influence; but he feared it was an interest that had been exerted in an improper manner. He wished not to detract from the influence of Peers; but while he wished to see legitimate influence held up, he desired to see illegitimate influence destroyed. He hoped the facts mentioned by the hon. Member for Athlone would have the effect of causing greater efforts to be made to carry reform into the House, which at present did not suitably represent the people.

Mr. COLLETT expressed his willingness to comply with the request of the hon. Member for Montrose (Mr. Hume), and withdraw the Motion. He did so the more readily because his purpose in some part had been answered by the discussion which had taken place.

BUENOS AYRES.

On the Motion for reading the Order of the Day for resuming the Adjourned Debate,

Lord J. RUSSELL said, he had given notice of a question with respect to Papers connected with the recent proceedings in Buenos Ayres; it was not clear to him what was the origin of that war, nor in what manner the instructions sent out there had been executed. He wished to know whether it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to lay any further Papers on the Table of the House by which the relations between the Argentine Republic and this country could be more satisfactorily explained?

Sir R. PEEL was not prepared at present, on the part of the Government, to lay any more Papers on the Table of the House. It was very difficult to ascertain what might be the local effect of producing such Papers upon the questions at issue between this country, France, and the States upon the banks of the River Plate. The communications were subject to great interruption—for instance, up to the present hour the Government had received no official account of the late action in the Parana. He only mentioned this to show how very uncertain was the position of affairs, and how doubtful might be the effect of producing further Papers on the subject.

Viscount PALMERSTON said, there was another question connected with these operations. It had been a general usage, when two countries united for the purpose of having recourse to coercive measures, for them to enter into a Convention, regulating the course to be pursued. That was the case in the interference of England and France in Portugal, in the case of Spain, and when England and France united to wrest the citadel of Antwerp from the hands of the Dutch. He wished to ask whether, in the present case, before the two countries determined to act together by force in the River Plate, any Convention was entered into, regulating the course to be pursued, and defining the objects which were to be attained?

Sir R. PEEL said, the instructions which had been sent out by the French Government to the French Agent there, were in substance the same as those sent by the English Government to Mr. Mandeville, but no Convention had been entered into.

Lord J. RUSSELL would defer his Notice in order to wait the arrival of further intelligence.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE (SEVENTH NIGHT).

On the Order of the Day for the resumption of the Adjourned Debate on the Corn Laws,

Viscount DUNCAN spoke as follows: If, Sir, I, who have always been a firm and consistent supporter of free-trade principles since I have had the honour of a seat in this House—if I have hitherto abstained from taking an active part in this debate, I can assure the House that it was not from any fear of any new arguments that have been brought forward by the native talent arrayed on the protection benches opposite. But, Sir, if I have hitherto abstained from mixing in this debate, it was from the firm conviction that our arguments on this side of the House were unanswered, and had proved unanswerable; and because I felt they had been triumphant out of doors—triumphant in and over the Cabinet: and I also hope I may add, that they are likely soon to be triumphant within the walls of this House. I have listened as patiently as I could during the six nights of this protracted debate, and I have not heard one new argument in favour of protection. I have heard much of personal attack; some lugubrious orations about the breaking up of a great party; some very curious statistics; and last, not least, some very newfangled doctrines touching political honour and political consistency, which I beg to assure my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton (Mr. S. O'Brien) are not to be found in Adam Smith, nor in any dictionary of political economy; and not being so to be found, appear to me to have but very little to do with this great question. I heard, Sir, several noble Lords, and several hon. Gentlemen, who had been constantly brought down to swell Ministerial majorities for the last three years, and who had assisted the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) on more than one occasion in his gradual abstraction of protection, quite alarmed and astonished at the success of their own efforts in favour of free trade. I heard one Member for Liverpool (Sir H. Douglas) denounce the right hon. Baronet as a wolf. I heard a noble Lord (Lord Sandon) the other Member for Liverpool say, it was very true the Minister was a wolf, but he should vote for the wolf because he was a wolf in sheep's clothing. This drew down on him a rebuke from my hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire

(Mr. Miles)—he who is the farmer's friend, who has always been a pattern of consistency, and who flatters himself he has ever been the consistent advocate of the old Corn Law in all its ancient splendour since he has had the honour of a seat in this House. It is true, that when the right hon. Baronet altered the old Corn Law in 1842, the Member for Somerset was the first person who rose in this House and pronounced a panegyric on the right hon. Baronet for having diminished protection. It is true, that in the horned-cattle debate in May 1842, my hon. Friend (Mr. Miles) expressed his firm conviction, that owing to science having been applied to agriculture, he felt that the English farmer, even with diminished protection, would be a match for his foreign competitor. My hon. Friend has quoted *Hansard.* Well might the right hon. Baronet warn his former supporter, that in referring to former discussions, he was playing with edge-tools—for on turning to the horned-cattle debate, I find that the hon. Member for Somersetshire was then, as now, the great agricultural prophet of the day. This hon. Gentleman, who in this debate has indulged us with some Russian statistics, stated at that time that a correspondent of his in New Orleans had written to inform him, that there was a district in America containing a population of 5,500,000 persons exclusively devoted to agriculture, with an area of 460,000 square miles of exquisite fertility; and that great preparations were being made by the agricultural inhabitants of these fertile regions to inundate England, as soon as the duty was taken off foreign cattle, with bulls, cows, sheep, oxen, and pigs. Now, Sir, it does so happen that my attention was recently recalled to this prophecy of my hon. Friend's by the following circumstance. Happening to go down into Warwickshire in May, 1842, the day after that ever-memorable horned-cattle debate, I met a very worthy friend of mine—a great grazier and proprietor of horned cattle in that part of the country. I met this agricultural gentleman, who is not by any means a light weight, coming galloping down a lane at a pace that was truly awful. "My good fellow," said I, "what is the matter?" "Get out of the way," said my friend; "you, and Sir Robert Peel, and the rest of you, you have been and done it up in London; you have ruinated the farmers with your *feelosophy*—that you have, quite entirely, my Lord: we be all ruined." "Well," said I, "my good fellow, but where are you galloping so fast?" "Oh," said the grazier, "I be off to Shipston market. I *sey* you does'nt understand agricultural statistics. *Ha'ant* you read what our great oracle, Mr. Miles, the farmers' friend, said t'other night? He never indulges in no exaggerations, like Mr. Cobden. I always believes him; and Mr. Miles has said as how 5,500,000 Yankees be a building and a loading of a Noah's Ark, in a place called Ohio, with millions of bulls, cows, sheep, oxen, and pigs; and they be a going to bring this here ark over to Bristol, to swamp us poor English farmers. They be going to give away the meat; and by this day six weeks, Mr. Miles has said that American mess pork will be sold at $3\frac{1}{2}d.$, and prime pork at $2\frac{1}{2}d.$, a pound in the Bristol market:" and having said this my poor friend rode off full speed, and before night had sold off half his stock at a very reduced price. Now, Sir, it was my fortune to meet this same Warwickshire grazier last Saturday, in the market place at Shipton-upon-Stour; and I asked him if he had come there to sell his corn? "No, my Lord," says he, "I been't come here for no such purpose." "What!" said I, "have you not read what your great agricultural oracle, Mr. Miles, said about Tamboff last night in the House of Commons—how we are all going to be swamped with foreign corn?" "No, Sir," said the grazier, "I have had enough of that 'ere agricultural agitator and his speeches. He do always, I observe, advise we farmers to sell at low prices; but I have found out he does'nt sell hisself in a panic of his own making. I be determined not to sell my corn this time, till I hear that the stack-yard at Legh Court be empty. He be a downright bad fellow, that Mr. Miles; he be a trying of it on again. I was gammoned out of a hundred pounds by him about cattle; but I be come to the determination not to believe none o' his gammon about corn." And, Sir, after this painful and instructing story, can it be wondered at that I have come to a similar conclusion? And as on this occasion I am compelled to choose between two great prophets, I am free to confess I am rather inclined to place my confidence in the predictions of the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury, who proved a true prophet about the Tariff, rather than in those of the hon. Member for Somersetshire, who showed himself to be but a very indifferent prophet about the probable price of meat in England when the duty was

lowered on foreign cattle. The same expectations as to the abolition of protection being followed by ruin, do not, however, seem to prevail universally on the protection benches. No sooner did the hon. Member for Somersetshire sit down, leaving the House in a state of panic, than, at the sound of that magic word, up jumped the Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson). The hon. Member was not in a panic; he was a man of iron nerves; he was not to be easily frightened. He rose to express his surprise at hearing right hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury bench making molehills into mountains. The hon. Gentleman admitted the potato disease. Well, what of that?—it was a mere temporary accident—a mere matter of small moment. To be sure, 4,000,000 of unfortunate persons in Ireland were starving: that is nothing, said the hon. Gentleman—I could cure that in a moment. [Mr. Hudson: That is not what I stated.] Well, I beg to be allowed to read the following extract from the speech delivered by the hon. Member for Sunderland on Tuesday evening:—

"He (Mr. Hudson) conceived, that in dealing with the Corn Laws, they had nothing whatever to do with the calamity that threatened the country. He viewed it with regret and anxiety—he was anxious to aid in alleviating it. It ought, in his opinion, to be met by the temporary expedient of a public subscription."

Such were the hon. Gentleman's own words on Tuesday evening. And now I beg to ask, whether that was not a distinct proposal on the part of the hon. Gentleman to the head of the Government to be allowed to descend on Ireland in the golden shower of a public subscription? I make no question of the hon. Gentleman's sincerity, in proposing such an expedient; but I doubt excessively the wisdom of adopting it. The hon. Gentleman had come forth in a new character as the champion of the agricultural interest—he who had often so cruelly invaded those turnpike trusts and rural solitudes which were once the pride and the boast of the country gentlemen of England. "I will show you," said the hon. Gentleman, "that cheap corn has been the ruin of the country;" and he referred at once to the period of 1841—a period of dear corn and of great distress—not a penny could be raised then even for a railway. But the hon. Gentleman admitted that in 1842 "a change came over them." He appeared to be a little jealous of the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury. He took the trouble to explain that the prosperity in 1842 was not caused by the Tariff, but by low prices, owing to an overproduction of English corn." The hon. Member abominated foreign corn. He especially warned us all against those long-headed merchants who import foreign corn to lower the prices—and I was not a little surprised to hear, in the very next sentence, that the hon. Member for Sunderland took credit to himself for importing foreign corn at 25*s.* a quarter. The hon. Gentleman was more discreet than the hon. Member for Somerset (Mr. Miles); he would not disclose to the House where supplies to cure the starvation in Ireland might be had at so low a rate as 25*s.* a quarter. Of one thing I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has convicted himself of being a good political economist, who knew how to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market he could find. "And if," said the hon. Gentleman, "people are starving in Wiltshire on 8*s.* a week, take a special train and come down with me into Yorkshire. We are all well fed and prospering there." This was valuable testimony from the hon. Member: it proved what was always denied by Gentlemen opposite, that the working classes were better off in the manufacturing than in the purely agricultural districts. I can assure the hon. Gentlemen I have a great respect for him, and I hope even yet to see so respectable a name as that of Hudson withdrawn from the provisional committee—the greatest bubble of the day, "Protection to Native Industry." What is the meaning of that word protection? It means the laying a tax on the many for the benefit of the few—on the poor for the benefit of the rich—on the poor consumer for the benefit of the wealthy producer. Protection in England means the attempt to keep up high prices and high rents by artificial means. As a landlord, I am no enemy to high rents fairly obtained; but I am an enemy to one class endeavouring artificially to raise the price of the articles of produce, at the expense of the rest of the community. Have extremely high prices benefited the farmer? I think not, and I am a farmer myself. Extremely high prices are prices of years of scarcity; the very years in which the farmer pays most for the cost of his production—most for the cost of his consumption—and probably the highest corn rent, at the very time when he can least afford it. Has the high price of potatoes been of advantage to the farmers who have lost their crops? Have high prices

been a benefit to the labourer? The labourer's wages are not regulated by the price of corn, but by the laws of supply and demand; and if the present demand for labour continues, I doubt excessively whether the right hon. Baronet's measure will have the slightest effect upon the price which is paid for labour in England. However much it may or may not reduce the price of corn —of this I am certain, that high profits only can afford high wages; and if profits be reduced, wages must fall, and an efflux of capital take place, which, to quote the words of Adam Smith, "is worse than the natural inclemency of the heavens, or than the barrenness of the soil." For nearly two centuries in England, the landed interest has been endeavouring to keep up prices by artificial means. In 1670, and again in 1690, Acts were passed to promote the exportation of corn by bounties, not to keep down but to keep up the price of that which remained in the home market. In 1770, England began and has since continued to be an importing country, and these Acts became a dead letter. As the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) at the head of the Home Department had so well explained to the House the other evening, the period between 1770 and 1790, was a period of free trade. We then came to the war; and at the conclusion of the war there existed, as at present, a panic amongst the agricultural interest. They expected to be swamped by foreign corn, and an Act was passed in 1815 of complete prohibition —an Act which he had frequently heard alluded to, in the course of the debate, as the Act which conferred the promise of those artificially high prices of which the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government is now charged with attempting to rob his late agricultural friends. But was this the intention of the Act of 1815? Was it the intention of those who promoted it to hold out any such promise of keeping up high prices at the expense of the community? I conclude, and I think I can prove, that nothing could be farther from the intention of the original promoters of that measure; for, on referring to the speech of Mr. Robinson, who introduced the new Corn Bill, on the 17th February, 1815, I find that he made use of the following remarkable expressions:—

"It was not now supposed that the object sought to be accomplished by this alteration of the Corn Law, was the mean, base, and paltry one of getting for a particular class of society a certain profit, at the expense of the rest. For his part, he declared before his God, if he thought this was the motive which actuated any individual who supported the alteration, and, above all, if he conceived that such would be the effect of the measure, no consideration on earth would have tempted him to bring it forward."

Such were the words of Mr. Robinson in 1815; and are they, the proud aristocracy of England, to debase themselves now by grappling to the last for this mean, base, and paltry object of attempting to gain for themselves a certain profit at the expense of the rest of the community? I always conceived that it was the duty of the aristocracy to lead, and not to follow, public opinion. [*Cheers.*] Yes, I always conceived it was their duty to direct, but not to attempt to coerce public opinion. Their ancestors had never shrunk from leading the way in many a well-fought field; and when a generous people are asking to lead the way and set an example, is the proud aristocracy of England now, for the first time, to fall back, and begin to count numbers, to calculate odds, and to fall on their knees to beg that generous people to protect them against foreign competition, at their expense? Such may be the principles and the practice of landlords and tenants in Somersetshire or Sussex; but such, I am happy to assure the House, is not the opinion of either landlords or tenants in the northern parts of the island. In the county of Forfar, in which I was born and bred, a very different feeling prevails. They are not afraid of Tamboff there. My countrymen are buckling on their armour, and preparing themselves to compete, and, I trust, to compete successfully, not only with foreign corn and foreign cattle, but—for the first fruits of this measure has been to raise the question—whether they cannot also compete with the foreign growers of hemp and flax. The cultivation of these articles, which are the raw material of their staple manufactures, they have cause to believe has been too much overlooked. Be that, however, as it may, the Scotch farmer fears neither the Russian nor the Belgian. The Scotch farmer has no exclusive burdens to complain of. I wish I could say as much for the tenant-farmers in England. They, I must confess, have to struggle with an exclusive burden on the agricultural population, which has not been alluded to, I mean the want of education. The Scotch farmer has a parochial school to send his child to. So also have the farmers in Prussia and America. But the English farmer has not the facility afforded him of readily educating his son. Let the Government remove this exclusive

burden from the farmers in England, and let them trust the rest to British energy and to British skill. In conclusion, I beg to state that I stand here as the independent representative of a large constituency; and I did not rise to explain away a single sentence I have ever uttered about the Corn Laws, either in the House of Commons or elsewhere. I never entertained more than one opinion on the subject, and I am prepared to act up to every pledge I have ever given. One pledge I have certainly given which I trust I have redeemed, in common with many Gentlemen on both sides of the House—a pledge to vote for any and every measure which I consider will be beneficial to the country at large: and with the sincere belief that the right hon. Baronet opposite is incapable of being actuated by unworthy motives, and that he has introduced a measure fraught with benefit to the commercial and working classes of this country, and with sincere belief, also, that the prosperity of the class to which I myself belong, is entirely dependent upon the prosperity of the rest of the community, I shall not hesitate to declare that the Government, on this occasion, shall receive my humble though hearty and honest support.

Mr. HUDSON, in explanation, begged, in the strongest possible manner the forms of the House would allow, to contradict the assertion of the noble Lord, that in the observations he had had the honour of addressing to the House, he ever meant, or did treat lightly the distresses of Ireland. He appealed to every Gentleman who had heard him to say whether any expression of his warranted the construction put upon it by the noble Lord. ["No, no."] What he stated was, that it was the duty of the Government immediately to provide for the distresses of Ireland, and that he would be ready to give his support to any measures the Government might bring forward tending to afford immediate relief to the Irish people. This, he believed, was the substance of what he had said. He did not know whether the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) who had said "Hear, hear," to the expression of the noble Lord, (Lord Duncan) had understood him; but he begged most distinctly to say that he did not, upon that occasion, and he hoped never would, treat lightly the distresses of the sister country.

Viscount DUNCAN apologized, if he had overstated the meaning of the hon. Gentleman, and was delighted to hear his expressions of sympathy with the Irish people.

Mr. Alderman THOMPSON said, that although he was aware that the subject-matter of the debate was exhausted by the hon. Members who had preceded him, still he trusted that he might be permitted to state the grounds on which he intended to give his vote. He claimed their indulgence, particularly from this circumstance, that he had held a seat in that House for six-and-twenty years, and had witnessed changes from time to time made in their fiscal laws. He had seen reductions in duties made, and the revenue sacrificed, without a corresponding benefit. He wished this House to remember that it had limited the issues of the Bank of England to 14,000,000*l.* on securities; and whenever the issue exceeded that amount, it must be in gold. They had limited the issues of the country bankers; and he could say, that men of great experience doubted whether the working of that measure were beneficial. Hitherto no inconvenience had been sustained; but then they were to bear in mind, that the times had been very favourable, and they had not been subjected to any very severe pressure of circumstances. He should like to know if any man could conceive a greater injury to the important interests of this country than would arise if foreign countries refused to follow the example of England? Was there not cause of alarm if that should be the case? And the right hon. Baronet had candidly and fairly stated that he could not hold out any expectation that foreign nations would immediately pursue a more liberal system of commercial policy towards us. That was one reason, amongst others, which had induced him to pause in adopting further measures of this sort; and, although he did approve of the measure of 1842, yet he could not but think that the right hon. Baronet had much overrated the advantages which had flowed from that measure. The House would bear in mind that several years antecedent to 1842 were years of great depression and distress; and that alternations of times of prosperity and adversity were inseparable from the state of society in this country. Periods of depression had before now occurred, and no doubt would again take place. When we considered the immense capital employed in manufactures and commerce, and the energy and enterprise which were characteristic of our countrymen, we must admit that in prosperous times they were very

apt to produce more than the home or foreign markets could consume. The right hon. Baronet had claimed the support of the House to the measure under consideration, in consequence of the partial failure of the potato crop, and the bad quality of the produce of last harvest. There could be no question that the potato crop of Ireland had failed to a very great extent; and he was sure that as the utmost sympathy had been expressed, so every relief would be afforded which it was in the power of that House to afford, in order to palliate that distress. Could any stronger proof be advanced in support of that assertion than the fact stated by the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department, that Bills for granting nearly half a million of money were now in course of passing through Parliament for the purpose of giving employment to the people of Ireland? And if that were insufficient he felt confident that any claim which the Government might make upon the liberality of the House, with that object in view, would be fully accorded. Before the assembling of Parliament there was a great outcry raised by certain parties that a famine was impending. Happily that cry had ceased; we had heard nothing of it for several weeks past; and if hon. Gentlemen took the trouble of reading any country paper, they would find that the price of agricultural produce was falling; that potatoes, wheat, flour, and meal were cheaper; thus showing that the cry of "famine" was utterly without foundation. But, supposing there had been ground for alarm, then, he would ask, why did not Her Majesty's Government at once take upon themselves the responsibility of opening the ports? The right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) alluded to certain precedents established towards the close of the last century, where the Government of the day had opened the ports; but, to his utter astonishment, he altogether omitted the case of the year 1826, though he believed the right hon. Gentleman was himself a Minister of the Crown at that time. In 1826, the ports were thrown open for oats, barley, peas, and some other articles, but not for wheat. No difficulty whatever was experienced by the Government of that day in procuring from that House an Act of Indemnity; neither was there any difficulty in maintaining the Corn Law, although the protection was much higher than at present. There was this difference, however, between the two periods—and a most important difference it was—that in the year 1826 we had no Anti-Corn-Law League. But, in 1846, that unconstitutional body was in existence; and he believed it had been the great moving power to induce the right hon. Baronet to adopt these measures, though that body did not represent public feeling to any great extent. It was said, that there was now a perfect understanding between the master manufacturer and the labourer that low prices were not necessarily the cause of low wages; but he begged to remind the House of the great alteration which had taken place in the tone and language of the League upon this question. He recollected that, some three or four years ago, the manufacturers of Yorkshire and Lancashire were loud against the Corn Law, upon the ground that they found it impossible to compete with the cotton manufacturers of Switzerland; they were in the habit of making contrasts between the rates of wages in Switzerland, and those paid in Yorkshire and Lancashire; and some leading manufacturers went further and stated, that unless wages could be reduced in this country, they should be compelled to remove their stock and capital to other countries. He, therefore, contended that it was a delusion to hold out, as the Anti-Corn-Law League had held out, that they could maintain wages at the present rate, though they reduced the price of food. He believed there never was a period in the history of this country in which the master manufacturer had realized such large profits, or the labouring classes had been better off, than at present. Could it, therefore, be matter of surprise that so many soldiers of the Guards obtained furloughs for the purpose of visiting their relatives at a distance? Could it be matter of surprise that the communications between the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary and the Horse Guards and Police Commissioners had ceased? Could anything be more strongly indicative of the increased comfort and happiness of the great bulk of the people than such facts as these? But the House would permit him to refer to another important fact in order to show the state of the labouring classes —he alluded to the country savings banks, an account of which had been published by Mr. Tidd Pratt within the last few days. By this Paper it appeared that, on the 25th of November, 1841, there were in the United Kingdom 841,204 depositors, representing a capital of 24,471,085*l.*;

and that three years afterwards—namely, on the 20th of November, 1844, the deposits had increased to 1,012,047, and the capital to 31,275,636*l*. The average sum deposited by each person in the United Kingdom appeared to be 27*l*. 18*s*. Looking at the savings banks in Yorkshire und Lancashire, the principal seats of our manufactures, the result of his examination of the Tables was that, on the 20th of November, 1841, the number of depositors in Lancashire was 49,948, and the capital deposited 1,665,171*l*.; whilst, on the 20th of November, 1844, the depositors numbered 67,159, and the capital amounted to 2,159,766*l*. In the towns of Lancashire, the Tables showed the following results:—

Towns.	Sums deposited in 1841.	Sums deposited in 1844.
Blackburn ...	41,661	54,298
Bolton	69,836	97,657
Burnley ...	31,356	41,550
Bury	35,174	54,039
Lancaster ...	63,890	77,953
Manchester ...	397,592	568,313
Preston ...	88,350	121,565
Warrington ...	112,355	126,236
Wigan	66,105	79,789

Coming to Yorkshire, he found that, on the 20th of November, 1841, the number of depositors was 59,434, representing a capital of 1,965,731*l*.; whilst, on the 20th of November, 1844, the depositors had increased to 71,114, and the capital to 2,256,843*l*. The Tables exhibited the following results with regard to the towns in Yorkshire:—

Towns.	Sums deposited in 1841.	Sums deposited in 1844.
Barnsley ...	27,395	35,979
Bradford ...	59,167	91,399
Halifax ...	49,963	73,339
Huddersfield	51,690	66,067
Leeds	233,780	262,908
Sheffield ...	161,969	182,838
Wakefield ...	50,363	57,596

Then, while the average of each depositor throughout the United Kingdom amounted to 27*l*. 18*s*. in the manufacturing districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire, the average amounted to 30*l*., showing an excess of deposit in those counties of 2*l*. 2*s*. He thought this was a pretty good indication of the state of the country. He believed it could not be denied that the labouring classes, especially those who were connected with manufactures, had possessed many of the comforts and enjoyments of life in a much greater degree during the last three or four years than for a long period antecedently. They had been more comfortable in their circumstances; and it was clear, from the returns he had referred to, that they had been enabled to accumulate very considerable sums of money. In this state of things, then, he asked why was it that these great changes were proposed? The right hon. Baronet stated that his object was to improve the moral and social condition of the labouring classes; but he would find that the agricultural interest was the best customer to the manufacturers, after all, and that his measures, instead of improving the moral and social condition of the labouring classes, would, by injuring the home market, have quite the contrary effect. To buy in the cheapest market was undoubtedly a very beautiful theory; but it was totally inapplicable to this country, where it was necessary, in order to maintain the public credit, to raise a revenue of 30,000,000*l*. annually, and nearly half as much more to uphold the establishments of the country. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War stated the other night that protection was a bad system, and that all classes had suffered under it. Now, if that were true, why had he not, in conjunction with his Colleagues in the Government, submitted a purer and more perfect piece of free trade than that now proposed? Did the right hon. Gentleman mean to say that the Cornish miner, the man who worked the deep, and comparatively poor, copper mines of Cornwall, would be much better off if he had less protection, and entered into competition with the rich and shallow mines of La Plata? Did he wish to see protection altogether abolished in that case? Did he wish the repeal of the navigation laws? If we were to have free trade in corn, he wanted to know if the farmers had not a right to bring their produce to market by that ship which would convey it at the cheapest rate? He wanted to know if they had not a right to demand the abolition of the monopoly possessed by the shipowner in the coasting and colonial trades? ("Hear, hear.") Hon. Gentlemen opposite might say "hear!" but he apprehended that if a proposition to that effect were made, it would be met by right hon. Gentlemen on that side of the House telling them—"Oh, the national safety and the national honour alike deter us, and demand that we should not have our coasting trade or colonial trade destroyed." He said that common justice,

as well as national honour and national policy, required that protection should be extended to the agricultural interest. By the law as at present existing, an English merchant might invest his capital to any extent that he thought fit in foreign funds, or in foreign manufactures, yet he was not allowed to embark 100*l.* in a foreign ship, and exercise the rights of an owner over that ship. Was the House, then, prepared to repeal the navigation laws? He could not bring his mind to go along with the right hon. Baronet in those extreme measures. He wanted to know what statesman, either in Europe or America, had advocated free trade? [Sir R. PEEL: It is advocated in the petition of the merchants of London.] He was ready to admit that he himself had signed that petition. But his question was, "Where was the statesman, either in Europe or America, who was the advocate of perfect free trade?" Certainly not Mr. Webster, than whom no man could stand higher in the estimation of the public. With the liberty of the House, he would read an extract from a speech of Mr. Webster, to the people of Boston, on the 15th of November last. But first he would remind the House that in 1842 the Americans increased their Tariff upon many articles 20, 30, 40, 50, and even 100 per cent.; and from communications he had had with merchants in that country, he believed that it had never advanced in prosperity with such rapid strides as under the present system of protection. He was quite aware that there was a strong party formed there for the relaxation of the Tariff; but he apprehended that that party would not succeed in accomplishing their object. On the 15th of November last Mr. Webster said—

"Among many other great questions upon which the election of next Monday must have some bearing, is that system of laws which we call the Tariff, which has received the general support of the State. Every man expects a ferocious attack upon the whole system. Every man expects that, since the Government now in power was established by the general voice of the Anti-Tariff States, an attempt will be made to destroy that whole policy. How far they will succeed I know not. There are circumstances of encouragement—circumstances of an opposite character. But my question is with the people of Massachusetts. What have the people of Massachusetts to expect from any change? Taking the Act of 1842 as a general law, of general operation, what have the good people of Massachusetts to expect from any change? The question is, whether the Tariff is conducive to the prosperity of Massachusetts? What is the criterion? I put it upon one ground only; I put it upon this one ground. I do not inquire what profits are made by the rich capitalists, or whether or not a few individuals grow rich under its influence; but I put this question—are the labouring classes well off? Are their wages high? Is labour in demand? (and these questions comprise the prosperity of five-sixths of the community). Are they in good condition? I ask these questions; and, if you give me a country where labour is in demand, and the labouring classes well off, I call that a happy country, tariff or no tariff. One thing more, gentlemen. There has always been an attempt, for the last twenty years or more, to show that this protective policy helps the rich only, building up such establishments only as Lowell and Springfield, and other places where large operations are carried on. This is not the foundation of the system, and never was. If you go back to the adoption of the Constitution, or if you look at the state of things amongst us, as it is now, the fact is that it is in the manufactures of a more individual character—the shop manufactures, those of the workers in iron, in brass; of the artisans working in their own shops, with the assistance of their wives and children—these are the interests for the benefit of which the system was founded in Washington's time, and is now. And let every man think of this; and when he is told of the aggrandizement of the great capitalists at Lowell and Dover, and Providence, and elsewhere, let him look at the many hundreds sf thousands of small capitalists, hammering over their own anvils, making hats in their own shops, obtaining by those processes of manufacture support and education for their families; and then let him remember that, without the duties at the Customs, there is not one of those manufacturers that could survive twelve months."

He would not trouble the House any further with extracts on that matter. But the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, the other night, in the course of his speech, had asked hon. Gentlemen who sat around him, whether they were prepared to retrace their steps on our commercial policy—to stand still, or to go forward? He, as an humble individual, could only speak his own opinions, and he certainly was not disposed to stand still. He was disposed to go forward; but, at the same time, he could not go along with the right hon. Baronet in the road which he had taken. He would presently state what road he should like to follow in preference to that of the right hon. Baronet. The right hon. Baronet had stated that the rental of the land of this country in the year 1815 was estimated at 32,000,000*l.*, and in the year 1842 at 37,000,000*l.*; and he thought the right hon. Gentleman had meant the House to infer that the rental was higher in the year 1842 than it had been in 1815 by five millions. But it should be remembered that much land which had been in a state of waste at the former period had been brought into a state of cultivation, and had corn grown upon it; so that there was an increase upon the an-

cient cultivation of the land of about 15 per cent. [Sir R. Peel: With a falling price for wheat.] But let the right hon. Baronet put against that the immense increase in the capital which had been employed in the cultivation of the soil since that period. Did the right hon. Baronet mean to say that, if twenty or thirty millions had been thus employed between the years 1815 and 1842, there was to be no interest upon that capital? Be the amount ten or twenty millions, it was included in the increase. It did not, therefore, appear to him, that the right hon. Baronet had made out the case in his comparison between the years 1815 and 1842. The inference he thought the right hon. Baronet had meant to be drawn was, that rents had advanced between the years 1815 and 1842, which it was the purpose of his argument to demonstrate was a fallacy. Whether he succeeded or not, let the House decide. The right hon. Baronet had asked whether the British merchant should be shackled and restrained in his operations, because of certain opinions held on that side of the House. Why, there was no objection to the merchant being left free to prosecute his schemes of commerce in this respect. The corn trade was more free than the tea trade and the tobacco trade. It had always been as open to British enterprise as tea and tobacco. The right hon. Baronet had asked if land did not let at a higher price now than formerly. He had made inquiry in quarters the most likely to be best informed on the subject; and he had been told that, since those measures of the right hon. Baronet had been proposed, no large estates had been sold, and no buyers had been found. [*Ironical cheers.*] Perhaps hon. Gentlemen opposite would be kind enough to give an instance, if they were in a position to state differently. Although he could not support the measures of the right hon. Baronet, he was free to confess that all his predilections were in favour of manufacturing interests. At a very early period of his life, accident had placed him at the head of a large manufacturing establishment, where a vast number of persons were employed, and, therefore, he had no dislike to manufactures: quite the contrary; all his predilections, as he had said, were in favour of them. But, at the same time, he wished to do justice to the community at large. The right hon. Gentleman had a right to expect to hear from him, as he had said he was not prepared to stand still, how he was disposed to proceed. He conceived he could advance in the course the right hon. Baronet had in view—viz., the improvement of the social condition of the labourer—in a way somewhat different. The right hon. Baronet had been most successful in his financial measures. He had got now a surplus of between 3,000,000*l.* and 4,000,000*l.*, and he should have advised him to reduce the duty upon an article of very general consumption—he meant tea. He knew, from observation, that a very large proportion of the labouring classes, especially those engaged in manufactures, were consumers of tea and sugar; and if the right hon. Baronet had reduced the duty upon tea to 6*d.* per lb., and that upon sugar to 1*d.* per lb., it would have been the greatest boon that any Minister could have conferred on the labouring classes. For what was the case with regard to tea? That article paid from 150 per cent. to 250 per cent. duty; costing 9*d.* per lb., it paid a duty of 2*s.* 2*d.* per lb.; and thus the consumers of tea in this country paid 9,000,000*l.* of money annually for that article; 4,000,000*l.* for duty, about 2,500,000*l.* for freight and other charges, and 2,500,000*l.* to the Chinese merchant. What was the case in America with respect to that article? Into England there were 30,000,000 of lbs. annually imported, and into America, which was the next great importer of tea, there had been imported last year 20,000,000 of lbs., upon which not one farthing of duty had been paid. Now, what answer could we give to the Chinese should they say, "We won't allow you to send your goods into our country upon payment of a duty of 5 per cent., when you tax our chief article of export at the rate of 150 per cent., whilst the Americans allow that, our staple article, into their country without payment of one single farthing." No satisfactory answer whatever could be given; and, in his opinion, our trade with China was in a most difficult and dangerous position at the present time, and required the most anxious, serious, and immediate consideration. The right hon. Gentleman was prepared to reduce the duty on French brandy and silks, with a view to abolishing smuggling. Why, tea was smuggled to a great extent; but, with respect to tobacco, which the right hon. Gentleman had not touched at all, according to a return made for the year 1841, and laid before the House, there had been 555 convictions for smuggling that article in that year. Many of those convictions were for smuggling such quantities as one to

two lbs. of tobacco, the value of which was about 8*d.* per lb., and the parties convicted had been committed to prison for periods varying from one to three months. The drawback upon soap allowed to the manufacturers of woollens, silk, flax, and cotton, for the year ending January 5, 1845, amounted to 81,128*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* The licensed soapmakers in England and Scotland numbered 183, and the convictions for smuggling soap in that year amounted to 16, or 1 in 10. He hoped, in the course of his observations, he had said nothing calculated to give offence to the right hon. Baronet. He could assure that right hon. Gentleman that no man more deeply regretted than he did, that a sense of duty compelled him to take a course opposed to the right hon. Baronet on the present occasion. He had, during the long period he had sat in that House, given the right hon. Baronet his general support. Humble he knew it had been, but most disinterested certainly it had also been; and therefore he deeply regretted that he could not continue to give him that support, because of a sense of duty, for he was under no engagement whatever in the matter. To his constituents in 1841 he had told on the hustings that for more than twenty years he had given a general support to the right hon. Baronet; and it was his full intention to have continued that support, because of his admiration of the right hon. Baronet's great talents as a statesman, and integrity as a Minister of the Crown.

Sir W. MOLESWORTH: I will not trespass upon your patience, Sir, by discussing the general principles of free trade. I will content myself with replying to some objections which have been urged against this measure by hon. Gentlemen opposite. They have repeatedly asserted that it would be injurious to the labouring classes; that free trade would cause low prices; and that low prices would be followed by low wages. The right hon. Baronet, on the first night of the Session, stated his conviction that there was no connexion between low prices and low wages. He has been repeatedly and violently assailed, both for this opinion, and for having arrived at such a conclusion from an experience of only three years. I think, however, if it were necessary, it would be easy to confirm that position by a much wider experience. Just before the dissolution of the last Parliament, I gave notice of a Motion for a Committee to inquire if any connexion could be traced between the amount of the wages of labour and the price of food. If I had been able to bring that Motion before the House, I think I could have shown, from a series of Parliamentary Returns embracing a period of more than thirty years, that there was no connexion between high wages and high prices, and low wages and low prices; on the contrary, it appeared to me, from a careful examination of those Returns, that generally speaking the wages of labour, especially of manufacturing and skilled labour, were higher when the price of food was low, than they were when the price of food was high. And the reason appeared to me to be this: when the price of food is low, the labouring classes—and they form the great bulk of the community—can expend a larger portion of their earnings on the purchase of articles of clothing, dress, and other the staple manufactures of the country. Consequently, when food is cheap, there is a greater demand for those articles, and a greater trade in them. There is, therefore, increased activity amongst the manufacturers; increased employment for their workmen; and, as a necessary consequence, the wages of labour, especially of manufacturing and skilled labour, tend to rise. On the other hand, when food is dear, as the labouring classes must first and before all things obtain the means of subsistence, they are compelled to expend a greater portion of their earnings on the purchase of food; consequently, they are compelled to diminish their consumption of articles of clothing, dress, and manufacture. There is, therefore, a diminution in the demand for those articles; stocks of them accumulate in the hands of the dealers; trade becomes dull and stagnant; the manufacturers employ fewer workmen; and, as a necessary consequence, the wages of labour, especially of manufacturing and skilled labour, tend to fall. Thus reason and experience show, not only that there is no connexion between high prices and high wages, and low prices and low wages, but that, generally speaking, the wages of labour are higher when food is cheap, than when it is dear. In fact, the amount of the wages of labour depends upon the relation which exists between the supply of labour and the means of employing it. If there be no alteration in the supply of labour, wages rise or fall according as there is more or less employment for labour. Now, the means of employing labour are in proportion to the capital of a country; to the extent of its trade, commerce, manufactures, and other industrial

occupations of its inhabitants. But it can hardly be doubted that free trade would augment the commerce, manufactures, and capital of this country. It follows, therefore, that with free trade, the means of employing labour would increase; the wages of labour would rise; and the condition of the labouring class would be improved. Some hon. Members are apprehensive lest a large number of agricultural labourers should be thrown out of employment by a repeal of the Corn Laws. It cannot be denied that if the repeal of the Corn Laws were to produce a panic amongst the agricultural classes; that if, in consequence of that panic, a large quantity of land were thrown out of cultivation, there would be a diminution in the demand for labour for agricultural purposes. Now, this might prove, under other circumstances than the present ones, a serious though temporary evil. Fortunately, however, if the Corn Laws were immediately repealed, there are causes at work which would fully counteract the effects of any such panic. The railroads which are now making, or about to be made, will create a great demand for that very description of labour which it is supposed the repeal of the Corn Laws would throw out of employment; and long before those railroads are completed, the apprehensions of the agricultural classes would be dispelled. As far, therefore, as the agricultural labourer is concerned, it would be difficult to find a better opportunity than the present one for repealing the Corn Laws. Most of the hon. Gentlemen who have spoken against this measure, have expressed their opinion that the repeal of the Corn Laws would chiefly affect the tenant, and not the landlord. I cannot agree with them. It appears to me, that if free trade makes any alteration in the value of land, or of agricultural produce, the chief gainer, or the chief loser, must be the landed proprietor. The hon. Gentlemen possess landed property. They have let estates. What, I ask them, does a farmer do before he offers to take an estate? Why, he considers the nature of the soil; the vicinity of the estate to markets; and the general value of agricultural produce; and, according to these particulars, he offers a greater or less rent for the estate. The landlord, or his agent, does precisely the same thing: he takes into account precisely the same particulars, and demands a rent accordingly. Thus a bargain is struck between landlord and tenant, for a definite or indefinite number of years. Now, suppose any event occurs which alters the value of the estate; as, for instance, if its fertility be improved by drainage or other means; if it be rendered more accessible to markets by new roads or railways; or if the general value of agricultural produce be altered by legislative enactments, or other causes; then, at the expiration of the period for which the original bargain was made, either the landlord demands a higher rent, or the tenant offers a lower one, according to the circumstances of the case. Thus a new bargain is struck, in which the landlord generally takes good care to obtain the full value of his estate, and the tenant is equally cautious not to offer more than that value. Thus it appears to me certain that, if free trade diminish the value of land, rents will fall: if, on the contrary, as I expect and believe, free trade will increase the value of land, then we shall have the pleasant task of raising our rents: in either case, it will be the landlord, not the tenant, who will ultimately lose or gain. In one point of view, however, the farmer will be a gainer by a repeal of the Corn Laws; for a repeal of the Corn Laws will be a final settlement of the corn question. During the last half century, there have been I know not how many Corn Laws, with the professed object of regulating the price of corn. Now, I may assert, without fear of contradiction, that under each Corn Law, the price of corn has been much less than was calculated upon or intended by the framers of those laws. If farmers, therefore, acted upon those expectations of the higher price in their bargains with their landlords, they must have been repeatedly and grievously disappointed. A repeal of the Corn Laws will dispel all doubt and anxiety on the subject. The farmer will soon know what he is about, and what bargain he ought to make with his landlord. I must acknowledge, however, that these observations chiefly apply to those farmers who possess sufficient capital and skill to cultivate their estates in the best manner. For only such farmers are really independent, and can make an equal bargain with their landlords. There is, however, another class of farmers, who possess little capital and less skill, the tenants of small estates, which they cultivate in the worst possible manner, many of which estates have been in the same family for successive generations: of this class of farmers the hon. Gentleman the Member for North Northamptonshire gave a pathetic description the

other evening. He portrayed in forcible terms their impending ruin, and attributed that ruin to the free-trade measures of the right hon. Baronet. It cannot be denied that the class of farmers in question will cease to exist. In many parts of England, especially in the west, with which I am well acquainted, they work harder and fare worse than the agricultural labourer. It is a mistake, however, on the part of the hon. Gentleman to attribute their present condition or future fate to free trade. Whether the Corn Law be repealed, or its provisions be rendered more stringent, their doom is inevitable. What is the cause of it? I answer, it is their want of capital and of skill. It has been discovered that, in agriculture, as in every other branch of industry, by the combination of capital and skill, production can be carried on more cheaply and profitably than in any other manner. Of late years, agriculture has ceased to be a mere empiric routine: it has become an art founded upon chemistry, vegetable physiology, and other kindred sciences. For the successful cultivation of this art, much capital and skill are required. By these means, the agricultural produce of certain portions of England has been greatly augmented, and the produce of the remainder might be equally increased. Indeed, it appears to me, that some of the hon. Gentlemen opposite have scarcely been guilty of exaggeration when they asserted, that if the whole of England were cultivated in the best manner, we might raise an amount of food sufficient for a larger population than the present one, and at as low a price as it can be imported. But to do this, the land must be cultivated by farmers who possess sufficient capital and skill. And what then would be the fate of the small farmers without capital or skill? Sir, the large farmer, with abundant capital, and acquainted with the best methods of agriculture, can produce more cheaply, can afford to pay a higher rent, and, at the same time, can obtain a better profit, than the small farmer without capital. The former can and does undersell the latter in the market. He can and does outbid him with the landlord; and he prospers, whilst the condition of the other daily becomes worse and worse. In proportion, therefore, as agriculture improves, in proportion as more capital and more skill are required in the cultivation of the soil, the doom of the small farmers, who have neither capital nor skill, becomes more and more certain—more and more imminent. They are the handloom weavers of agriculture, and their fate is the necessary consequence of the competition between capital and skill on the one hand, poverty and ignorance on the other. We may sincerely deplore the sufferings of the individuals, but neither as individuals nor as legislators can we prevent the result; for, in order to prevent it, we should have to stop the accumulation of capital, to check the advancement of knowledge, and stem back the tide of human progress. Though most of the hon. Gentlemen who have spoken from the opposite side have declared their belief that the repeal of the Corn Laws is only a farmers' question, yet I know that many who sit on that side of the House firmly believe that free trade will diminish the value of land, and that the landowners of England will be ruined. As an owner of land, and of no other description of property, I do not entertain any such apprehensions. For some years the principles of free trade have evidently been gaining ground, and every year the repeal of the Corn Laws has become more and more probable; yet has the value of land decreased in this country? Certainly not. Land sells better now, and for a greater number of years' purchase, than it ever did before. Upon what, I ask, does the value of the land of a country depend? It does not depend entirely, or even mainly, upon its fertility; for in some places a few acres of inferior soil are much more valuable and fetch a higher price in the market, than thousands of acres of the richest soil in other places. The value of land depends mainly upon the wealth and numbers of the surrounding population, and upon its vicinity to good markets. Now, when I reflect on the enormous population, the vast trade, and the great wealth of this country—when I calculate the stimulus which will be given to population, the additions made to commerce and wealth, by a system of free trade—when, on the other hand, I consider the narrow extent of the land of England, and the increasing demand for it which must arise from any increase of wealth and population, I laugh at the notion that the landlords of England can be permanently injured by a repeal of the Corn Laws. It is my firm belief that the value of our land is augmenting, and will augment; and I contend that we owe that augmentation to the accumulation of the manufacturing and commercial classes. For example, a great revolution seems to be about to take place in our means of internal communication.

If this country continue prosperous—if commerce and manufacture thrive, before long England will be covered with railroads—railways will exist between every town of any importance, and extend into every district possessing either mineral or agricultural wealth. Great Britain will become like one vast city: our remotest agricultural districts will be brought, as it were, into the vicinity of the metropolis; and a few hours will convey their productions, their corn and cattle uninjured to the best markets of the world. To whom shall we be indebted for these railroads, which, in many cases, will double the value of our land? Not to the capital of the landowner, but to the accumulations of the commercial and manufacturing classes. More than any other set of men, the landowners of England are interested in fostering the commerce, augmenting the wealth, and increasing the population of this country; for in proportion to that commerce, wealth, and population, will be the demand for our land; and in proportion to that demand will be its value in the market, and we shall be rich. Therefore, Sir, if I were not actuated by nobler or better motives, self-interest alone would induce me, as a landowner, to give my cordial support to the measure of the right hon. Baronet.

Mr. BENETT, in opposing the present measures, was not influenced by ill will or animosity either against the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, or against those who now supported him. As for himself, he never gave any support as a party man to any Minister, nor to any party in that House. He would, however, tell those who originated the measure which produced the present juncture, and those who supported it, that as there was, as they avowed, a change in their sentiments, they acted most honourably in having changed their conduct. The present was a question of very great importance—it was a question on which he entertained for many years very strong opinions. He heard with great pleasure the position which was laid down by the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, when he said that the object of all political economy should be to afford the greatest amount of happiness to the largest number of people; and the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government expressed a similar opinion. It certainly was the duty of the Government and of the Legislature to do everything in their power to afford the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest mass of the people; but then the question was, whether the measure now before the House was the one most likely to accomplish that object—the question was, whether they would enjoy more happiness with it or without it. It was affirmed that cheapness of food would afford a great amount of happiness to the population: he agreed with the sentiment that cheapness of food was most desirable; but still care should be taken, lest in endeavouring to produce cheapness of food, an error might be committed which would rather injure than serve the people. He admitted that cheapness of food produced by home labour was most desirable, because in proportion to the extent of that production, there was a demand for wages, and the increase of wages was in proportion to the demand and the supply of labour; but care should be taken lest, in promoting cheapness of food, we may not lessen the demand for labour, while we did not diminish the supply. It was a fact, which he could establish on the clearest evidence, that every quarter of wheat which would be brought to this country would displace an amount of labour which would be equivalent to 25*s.*; so that care should be taken not to reduce the demand for labour, either by importation or by any means; and it would appear from a calculation he made, that the importation which might take place would produce a defalcation in labour to a very large amount, probably to the amount of five millions. Some gentlemen who represented the sentiments of free traders, had told the people that wages would not be reduced by a reduction in the price of food. But that was not possible to suppose, as the amount of foreign corn which would be imported must eventuate in the destruction of the English labourer; and would not the want of the demand as regarded the English labourer tend to the reduction of wages? Most assuredly it would, for that there would be a considerable reduction in the price of labour he would contend; and that reduction would be to the amount of 25*s.* the quarter. The hon. Member for Manchester made a calculation that the amount of labour for a quarter of wheat was only 9*s.*; but he had drawn up a document, which would show what really was the amount of labour expended on a quarter of wheat—and the accuracy of the document was beyond all contradiction.

The hon. Member read the following document:—

PYTHOUSE LABOUR ON ARABLE LAND.

Common labour, equal to four weeks' labour of one man, at 8s. per week, on each acre . .	32s.	per acre.
Cost of beer, equal to 2s. per week each man	8	—
Blacksmith, wheelwright, collar maker, and extra labour, equal to one weeks' labour per acre, one man at 8s.	8	—
Cost of beer to ditto, equal to 2s. per week to one man . .	2	—
Cost of labour and beer per acre .	50s.	—
In the Four-field system, the wheat crop should bear two years' cost of labour, or 100s. Supposing the above calculations to be correct, allowing the crop of wheat to average four quarters, the cost of labour on each quarter of wheat will be	25s.	—

So that the hon. Member for Manchester had fallen into an error when he stated the quarter at 9s., the cost being 25s. He also made from his own books a calculation of a farm of 260 acres of arable land—which he would submit to the attention of the House.

PYTHOUSE AND LINDLEY FARMS, FEB. 1846.

Acres.		Per acre.	£.
260	Arable—Common labour equal to four weeks' labour of one man per acre at 8s. per week	32s.	... 416
	Cost of beer equal to 2s. per week each each man . .	8	... 104
	Blacksmith, wheelwright, collar maker, and extra labour equal to one week's labour per acre, at 8s. . .	8	... 104
	Cost of beer equal to 2s. per week each man . .	2	... 26
100	Meadow — Common labour, equal to two weeks' labour, one man on each acre at 8s. per week . . .	16	... 80
	Blacksmith, wheelwright, collar maker, and extra labour equal to one week's labour of one man per acre, at 8s. per week	8	... 40
	Beer, cost of, equal to 2s. per week, each man, in common labour two weeks . .	4	... 20
	Beer, blacksmith, wheelwright, collar makers, and extra labour, one week of one man per acre	2	... 10
200	Pasture — Common labour equal to one week's labour, one man at 8s. per week .	8	... 80
	Beer, ditto ditto . . .	2	... 20
560			

Labour on Pythouse farm . .	£900
Poor's-rate average 6s. per acre .	198
Tithe average 6s. per acre . .	198
Capital employed at 10*l.* per acre, 5,600*l.* should give 10 per cent. .	560

From that statement, which was incontrovertibly true, every quarter of wheat elsewhere produced and imported here would deprive the British labourer of earnings to the amount of 25s. He would, therefore, ask those Gentlemen—those free traders who proceeded through the country telling strange tales, to seduce the people to their views, and for whose information he prepared those documents—could they deny their veracity? He was as anxious as any man could be, that the people should have every fair privilege, and that they should have cheap food; but he would remind the House his desire would be, that it should be the produce of this country. That it should not be the produce of foreign countries—that it should be grown at home. His wish was, that the English labourer should neither suffer, nor be reduced to distress; and which would be the case unless that grain on which he was fed was grown in this country. As to low wages, the old argument was abandoned. He remembered many years ago the argument used by manufacturers was, that they wanted to effect low wages in order to compete with the foreign manufacturer, and which, they said, they could only do by the reduction of wages. They had the honesty publicly to declare what was the fact—they were not so prudent then as they are now; a new generation had started up, who saw that that argument would not do—that it would be unsafe and unpopular to talk of low wages; but that they should talk of the exchange of commodities. The Anti-Corn-Law League therefore say, that they do not want to reduce the wages, but to extend their traffic—the old argument being superseded by one more congenial to the times. But to bring about low wages was the object; and the design was to accomplish it by the measure of the right hon. Baronet—a measure which would be the ruin of the English farmer. But if the advocates of free trade be anxious to serve the poorer classes, why not advocate the reduction of those taxes which press so heavily on them? Why not advocate the repeal of the malt tax, the tobacco tax, and those other taxes which the labouring classes feel? He would denounce the men who, having themselves made large fortunes, who purchased large properties, and were anxious to exempt those properties from every burden, while they professed to sympathize with the labourer, and yet would not advocate the removal of any tax which would prove to him a real relief—

not even the removal of an impost on tobacco, which is to him a luxury, when, at four o'clock in the morning, he proceeds to his business with his pipe in his mouth. He was a very old man, and thanked God that he had once more the power of speaking honestly his sentiments, as it might be the last time he should have an opportunity to do so; and he should be rejoiced hereafter to reflect that he had taken that opportunity of requesting and urging upon the rich and great of the country to relieve the poorer classes of the people of those heavy taxes, and to take the burden upon themselves. He had repeatedly, and repeatedly again, heard the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League informing the people that the result of the repeal of the Corn Laws would be, that they would have cheap bread and dear labour. Now, he asserted that those two things could not exist together; and if they should have cheap bread, they would have cheap labour also; and those who stated the contrary, would not only deceive themselves, but would also deceive others. He remembered on one occasion, some time ago, that at an agricultural meeting, when he had distributed some premiums amongst the small farmers and labourers, in his part of the country, for employing implements in farming, he had occasion to address them, in the course of which he had told them that he respected them as friends; for he looked upon them as such; and if he had to be born again, he would rather be born an honest labourer like one of them, than in any other class of society. He had made that statement in the excitement of the moment, it was true, but yet he felt it most sincerely; and he would wish to know if any of those Gentlemen opposite, who were connected with the manufacturing interest would address the labourers as friends? He was sure they would not, for there was no sympathy existing between them: they looked upon the labourers as mere machines. He considered those persons who resided on his land as his friends; and therefore there could be no impropriety in addressing them as such. A great many allusions had been made to the meeting that had been held at Goatacre; and he wished to make a few observations respecting it, as he knew the place well. The persons who attended that meeting, were not the labourers of the place, but strangers, who were collected together in the night time. The League pretend that they do not pay emissaries, but he knew that they did; and an hon. Member had said, previous to that meeting being held, that before long there would be a "flare up" in Wiltshire. At that meeting, a Mr. Pedlar, who had been taken out of the workhouse a short time previously, was put into the chair. He had read the speech which it was alleged that person had delivered on the occasion, and also the speech of a Mr. Edwards, who addressed those assembled. They had both been sent to him, and he had therefore read them attentively. He would wish that hon. Gentlemen would read those speeches, and give their opinion as to whether they believed them to be the production of those two persons. For his part, he would say without hesitation, that they were the manufacture of the League. There was one person who had admitted that he received a guinea a day for going about the country to get up these meetings. The people of Wiltshire were respectable men, and had nothing to do with that meeting; for, with the exception of some half-dozen lazy fellows, such as always were found in every locality, and who were an annoyance to the place, with these exceptions, they were as respectable a body of labourers as had ever been met with anywhere. He remembered the labourers of Wiltshire a great many years. He was old enough to remember when the property tax of 10 per cent. was in existence. At that time he was young and aspiring, and could not bear to see the deception that was used towards the people. He remembered attending a meeting at Salisbury, when Mr. Cobbett and Mr. Hunt were making speeches, and misleading those who were present, for the purpose of running down the property tax; and he remarked to an old gentleman, a Mr. Burton, who was with him, "Was it not disgraceful to allow those fellows to deceive those men?" "Oh!" said his friend in reply, "you talk foolishly; those fellows have no property, but we have; let them alone, they are doing us a service." The consequence was, that the property tax was run down, and by those very persons too, who were injured by its removal; for since then tax upon tax had been levied on the people, from which they had been free previously. At Goatacre and other places the people were induced to cry out for a free trade in corn, and subdivision of land, which he could assure them would prove to be the ruinof small farmers, who would be obliged,

from want of sufficient capital, to sell their produce at any price they could obtain—as it were from hand to mouth—not like the large landholders, who could keep their corn until such times as prices would prove sufficiently remunerative. It was the small farmers who would be ruined, as the little fish were eaten up by the big ones, and the little manufacturers destroyed by the large and extensive ones. He did not complain of that, but merely stated it as a fact. Last year the price of wheat was 44*s.* a quarter; and the small farmers, who could not afford to keep it back, sold at that price, which was the most they could get. He knew a very extensive farmer, who had 4,000 sacks of wheat, and he being in independent circumstances, kept his stock back until he was enabled to realize 72*s.* a quarter. These were facts which no one could deny; and he would be glad if hon. Gentlemen on the opposite side of the House would take the trouble of inquiring into them, and they would find that it was as he stated, and that it would be the little and not the large farmers, that would be crushed by it. He was a landholder himself, and was not speaking for the benefit of his own class, but of that of the small farmers, as he felt quite satisfied that the land would not be injured, but merely the class of persons he had mentioned. At all events the loss that landlords might sustain must eventually fall on labourers: first, they would lose what was allowed them for beer, and then they would have a reduction in their wages; and, therefore, he protested against the measure for the sake of the poor labourers, and the small but industrious farmers. He considered that they would have to suffer greatly from the decrease that must necessarily take place in the demand for their produce, and for which they would be without a remedy; but if the manufacturers had no demand for their goods, they had only to put out their fires and dismiss their workmen; but demand or no demand, the farmer was still obliged to go on. It seemed to him, under these circumstances, that passing the present measure was as if the landed interest was to be fattened for slaughter. The manufacturers, whose movements he had watched for fifty years, appeared to think that their interests were safe, that the state of things might continue as prosperous as they appeared to be, sufficiently long to enable them to amass 100,000*l.* or 150,000*l.* He had seen such periods when produce was high, and labour low, But there came a day of retribution, and then came with it the misery which fell most heavily upon the poor labourers. He was a sort of self-elected prophet, and he would tell hon. Gentlemen that, after the passing of that measure, the sooner they made up their books they would find it to be so much the better—and the sooner they left their tall chimnies it would be so much the better; as he firmly believed that the day of trial was coming, and that they were manufacturing more than the world could consume. Foreigners were beginning to rival them, and he was afraid that manufacturers would soon meet with a day of distress. With respect to wages he did not wish to say much; but the Anti-Corn-Law League told them that labourers had verry low wages. He would wish to ask those free traders if it were not one of the principles which they advocated themselves, to buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest? If it were so, why not allow farmers to act upon their own principle? He could tell them, however, that wages were not governed by the farmers, but by the demand for labour. When those gentlemen connected with the manufacturing interests speak of the rate of wages in their respective districts, he considered that they should also add whether at the time quoted it was one of prosperity or the reverse: the average should be given, and not a particular instance advanced as a general principle. He was much surprised, when it was generally admitted that everything was in a thriving condition in the country—when the farmers were satisfied with the prices they were receiving for their produce — in short, when everything was in a state to be let alone, he was surprised that at such a time every interest in the country was interfered with. They had two great parties in the country and in that House; and when he looked to the respective advocates of each party, he admitted that he had great respect for the talents of hon. Gentlemen who sat on the same side of the House as he did, and he had an equal respect for the talents of those Gentlemen who sat opposite; and he could not believe that any sinister or unworthy motive had actuated hon. Gentlemen in the course they had resolved to pursue—yet he could not conceal his astonishment at the very sudden and extraordinary change that had taken place in the opinions of many of them. Though his feelings had hitherto

been in unison with the party on that (the Ministerial) side of the House, yet when he saw them join in the measures and principles of those who were universally opposed to them, it somewhat alarmed him. He could scarcely understand hon. Gentlemen stating that there must be a Government, and that one of two right hon. and learned Gentlemen in that House must be the leader—that they had to decide between them, and them only. What a miserable state of things was that, that they must either follow the right hon. Baronet on that side of the House, or the noble Lord on the other, and that, without them, they could not form a Government! That appeared to him to be very extraordinary; and he thought that greater mischief could not be created by any party, than was about to be effected by the introduction of that measure based on such a principle. He had observed that when one great political leader had passed away, there was always another ready to start up and take his place; and he, therefore, denied the proposition that a Government could not be formed without the aid of either of those two right hon. Gentlemen, who were looked upon as the leaders of the two great parties in that House. He had witnessed many important events in his time; but he confessed that he had not seen any more important than that would be—the passing of the measure under discussion.

Mr. HENRY BERKELEY: I might have been unwilling to obtrude myself upon the House in this protracted debate, had it not been for the prominent position in which my hon. Colleague has placed himself by moving the Amendment. I find myself called upon to make some remarks on the subject, and I intend to confind myself as much as possible to the line of argument adopted by my hon. Colleague. My hon. Colleague has thrust himself into the front of the protectionist army. Whether he has achieved this greatness willingly, or it is greatness thrust upon him, we have no right to inquire; but there I find him, pleading the cause of protection sternly and stiffly. My hon. Colleague argues, "There was no special necessity for the measure." My hon. Colleague observes, "Even the hon. Member for Wolverhampton must be astonished at the miraculous conversion of some of his new coadjutors, who were now prepared to substitute for their own the opinions of the Member for Stockport;" and my hon. Colleague winds up his determined protectionist speech in these words—"He believed that he was acting for the benefit of the country and the Colonies also, by advocating protection for every branch of British industry." Now, Sir, the astonishment my hon. Colleague evinces for the conduct of others, may be somewhat abated if my hon. Colleague will only take the trouble to scan his own. On Monday, the 9th, my hon. Colleague made the speech from which I have quoted extracts; and on Tuesday, the 10th, having been asked by a most respectable constituent to support the prayer of a petition, signed by 18,000 of his constituents, approving of the Ministerial plan, but preferring immediate abolition, my hon. Colleague—ever having voted against the annual Motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton—ever having been a sturdy protectionist—having, on the 9th, made a protectionist speech, thus writes on the 10th:—

"London, Feb. 10, 1846.

"Dear Sir—I received your letter this morning, and regret that I cannot give my vote in favour of the immediate repeal of the Corn Laws, as I am opposed to the measure introduced by Sir R. Peel, when considered as a whole; but though I cannot give my vote in favour of the immediate repeal, I do not hesitate to say that I think that it would be better for all parties that the repeal should be immediate; and, entertaining this view of the question, if the Motion should be made, I shall not oppose it.

"My speech of last night will, I hope, sufficiently explain to you my reasons for not being able to come round to a sudden change of opinions.—Believe me, dear Sir, yours truly,

"Philip W. S. Miles.

"G. Thomas, Esq."

Now, this is consistency with a vengeance! Why, if the hon. Member for Wolverhampton be astonished at the conversion of any one, he may well be astonished at the conversion of the hon. Member for Bristol. Has the proposition of the right hon. Baronet to deal with the Corn Laws had the wonderful effect of disarming the hon. Member's objection to total abolition? But no, he will not now oppose the instant abolition of the Corn Laws. Then, if not, why not? Because the right hon. Baronet has brought forward a scheme for a sort of modified abolition of the Corn Laws, can that be a pretence for the hon. Member for Bristol giving up all defence of protection; and how are we to reconcile his speech of the 9th with his letter of the 10th? Really, when Gentlemen opposite talk of inconsistency, it would be better to remove the beam from their own eye, before they look after the mote in the eye of their neigh-

bour; and I would just ask my hon. Colleague if the Conservatives of Bristol are likely to be hypercritical—whether they might not think that his determined opposition to his own political leader might savour of faction, coupled as it was with the surrender of his opinions to those of a political opponent? I now turn to that great commercial city which we have unitedly the honour to represent, and I tell my hon. Colleague that he does not speak the opinions of the majority of the inhabitants of the county and city of Bristol—nor of the constituency, nor of that portion of the constituency which sent him to Parliament. I believe most decidedly this to be the case. The petition which I presented contains 18,000 signatures, and those the signatures of Conservatives equally with Liberals. Now, if my hon. Colleague spoke more than his opinion—if he claims the weight which a Member deserves who speaks the voice of a powerful constituency—where were his petitions? Not a single one did he, or could he, produce. The opinions of the hon. Member on this question are the opinions of a mere clique Bristol has suffered too much from the principle of monopoly not to feel disgust at the very name. Monopoly has been the evil genius of the city. Whatever strength protectionists may have in other parts of England, it exists not in Bristol. I have heard loud boasts from hon. Gentlemen opposite, of an appeal to the people. An appeal to Bristol, I most decidedly believe, would prove that the constituency fully recognize the principles of free trade; and I fear my hon. Friend would find that his supporters in that city would not sanction a secession on his part from Her Majesty's present Minister. In short, since my hon. Colleague cannot understand the signs of the times—cannot read the writing on the wall—the people of Bristol will read it for him. They will discriminate between obstinacy and consistency; and if my hon. Colleague stands still, his constituency will follow the right hon. Baronet in his onward course. And why should they not feel and yield to the pressure of the times, and, following the example of the two first statesmen of the age, give up foregone conclusions—abjure bygone errors—and, uniting heart and hand, do that tardy justice to their country, the necessity for which has forced itself on their reason?

Mr. TOLLEMACHE said, that surely the speech of the hon. Member who had just sat down was more suited to the Bristol hustings than the House of Commons. He could assure the House that he had no intention of encouraging it by a repetition of replies to arguments which, in his opinion, had already been satisfactorily answered, and which would, no doubt, be again satisfactorily answered in the course of that debate; but as the hon. Member for Durham, after whom he had risen to speak, but in vain, the last night of the debate, gave vent pretty freely to the expression of his opinion on the subject of farming in Cheshire, perhaps he might be allowed, as one of the Members for that county, to express his belief that if the hon. Gentleman had had the same experience in the cultivation of the soil that he had in the manufacture of cotton goods, not only would he have arrived at a very different conclusion with respect to the state of farming in the county of Chester, but he would also have been thoroughly satisfied that so pressed down was the landed interest by local and general taxation as to make it utterly impossible for the British farmer to compete with the foreign farmer; and, therefore, the hon. Gentleman, instead of being, as he then was, a thorough-going and an ultra free trader, would, at this moment, have been a most determined and rigid protectionist. It was not to an agriculturist that the hon. Gentleman would go for an opinion when carrying on manufacturing operations; consequently he must excuse him for declining, as he did decline, to acknowledge him as any great authority, or, indeed, as any authority at all, on matters relating to agriculture. However, as the hon. Gentleman had favoured them with his observations, he should state that, although he had the honour of being one of the Members for South Cheshire, he was connected, both as a landed proprietor and as a resident, with another county, which was acknowledged to be one of the best cultivated in the kingdom; and, from all he had seen in that and other counties he did not hesitate to declare that, in many parts of Cheshire, agricultural improvement was progressing as rapidly as in any other part of the country. It was true that improvement had been seriously checked and the confidence of the farmers much shaken by the agitation carried on against the Corn Laws by the Anti-Corn-Law League—a league that, if it did not owe its existence, at all events owed its importance and influence, to the vacillating and tampering

conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers, during the last two or three years, with respect to protection generally. As the hon. Gentleman appeared to take so great an interest in Cheshire landlords and Cheshire farmers, he strongly recommended the hon. Gentleman, as some amends for the mischief he and his brother leaguers had done, to vote as he should vote, against the free-trade scheme of Her Majesty's Government. The hon. Gentleman had also spoken of the "proud aristocracy" of Cheshire. Now, as he concluded he meant that expression to imply the meaning given to it on a recent occasion by the right hon. Baronet, viz., that pride in which the most exalted and worthy might justly indulge, he had only to thank him for such a compliment to a portion of his constituents. Without regard to the great question before the House, the opinions he had always held respecting protection to all interests remained unchanged; and he should certainly feel it his duty to act up to those opinions, by voting against the measure introduced by the Government. If the present or any other Government had reason to apprehend a scarcity of food, either in England or Ireland, he should be most anxious for an immediate and effectual remedy being applied to meet so fearful a calamity; and one of those remedies should be, perhaps, the opening of the ports for a limited period. At the end of that period, he was well aware that if the Ministers pursued an undecided, vacillating course, they would be unable to maintain the Corn Laws, or indeed anything else; but if their course, on the contrary, were bold and decided, the Corn Laws would be maintained, and without great difficulty. He did not attribute the present prosperous state of the country to the relaxations that had been made in the Tariff, but to markets which had so providentially opened — to the great increase of wealth to the country consequent on a succession of good harvests—to the confidence given to capitalists, by making, as the income tax had done, the revenue of the country exceed its expenditure — to the encouragement that confidence had given to the construction of railways and other public works, and thereby the employment of labour, which had added so immensely to the consuming powers of the country. Had no relaxation in the Tariff taken place, there would, in his judgment, have been an equally prosperous state of things, and a much larger revenue. It was his belief that as long as the prosperity of trade could be forced up to its present height, and the railway mania lasted, the consuming powers of the country would be such that, even under a free-trade system, it might be possible to obtain remunerating prices for agricultural produce; but when the season of depression in the manufacturing districts arrived—and arrive it occasionally would—there would be nothing to fall back or rest upon, and the most fearful consequences would be the result to every class and every interest in the kingdom. After the course adopted by Her Majesty's advisers with respect to the dissenters' chapels, the College of Maynooth, and academical education in Ireland, in previous Sessions, and in this Session with regard to the Corn Laws, it was his painful duty to declare that he could no longer incur the responsibility of being one of their supporters in Parliament. He should, of course, support them on questions on which he might consider them right, and vote against them when he might consider them wrong. He felt the greatest regard and respect for them as individuals, but he could no longer have confidence in them as Ministers. The power of the leaders of a Government professing to be Conservative, in carrying measures that would be acceptable to Gentlemen opposite, holding avowedly Radical opinions, was unbounded: for they could always command a certain number of votes on their own side, which, together with support from the Opposition, would at any time ensure to them a majority. But he could not continue his confidence to any set of men, were they ever so respectable or talented, when it was proved that their adherence to any one great principle could not be depended upon. Deeply, however, as he deplored the change that had taken place in the opinions of Her Majesty's Ministers, extraordinary as it was that so many conversions should have occurred in so short a space of time, he was thoroughly satisfied that that change had been the result of the most earnest and conscientious conviction; and under such circumstances it was, no doubt, their duty, as honourable men—it was a duty they owed to their Sovereign and their country, openly to avow that change of opinion. But although they were unquestionably right in that, they were, in his judgment, decidedly wrong in continuing in power without first making an appeal to the country; for he feared

they had laid themselves open to the serious charge of making use of the power they possessed as a Government to overturn the very principles, by the profession of which, and for the defence of which, that power had been obtained. That charge, compared to which that of inconsistency (important as it was that public men should on great questions maintain their consistency) was trifling indeed—that serious charge had yet to be met and satisfactorily answered by one of the Ministers of the Crown. When it had been satisfactorily answered, by no one would the answer be received with greater pleasure and satisfaction—by no one would it be more heartily cheered—than by himself. He was well aware that, brought forward as this measure was by a nominally Conservative Government, it would be carried with triumph through that, and he feared through the Upper House of Parliament; but a thousand times would he rather fall, as he knew he would fall, with the agricultural Members with honour, than join in a triumph which he could not but fear would be attended with disgrace.

Mr. T. DUNCOMBE said, that, cordially concurring in the measure, and believing it to be one which not only did honour to the Ministry that introduced it, but would reflect credit upon the Parliament that adopted it; believing also, after the statement made by the right hon. Baronet opposite, that through the influence of public opinion alone could he overcome the difficulties with which he was surrounded, or be sustained against the obloquy with which bigotry and ignorance had assailed him; he thought it behoved those who did not owe their seats to the nomination of peers, and were not removable at their pleasure, but owed them to the free and independent choice of the people, to stand up for the measure, and not give to it a silent, a lukewarm, or a jealous support. Far be it from him to let hon. Gentlemen opposite suppose him insensible to the painful and false position in which they were placed; he could make every allowance for those whose powers of change could not keep pace with the conversions they saw going on around them; far be it from him to deny that a great, a very extraordinary, a peculiar, a simultaneous change of opinion had taken place in the breasts of distinguished men on both sides of the House, concurrently with the advice tendered by the right hon. Baronet to his Cabinet in November last; but it did not become hon. Members on his (Mr. Duncombe's) side of the House to cavil at the change, or quarrel with it; it was for them to feel grateful for it, and to admire the ability which it was carried out. But he must say, that those hon. Gentlemen for whom he had just expressed some sympathy, because they could not in conversion go the pace of those who sat near them, did not seem to be taking the right course to extricate themselves from their false position. Why indulge in every sort of personal abuse and reproach towards the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues, with every now and then a sort of hypocritical canting exclamation—"We give you every credit for conscientious motives; we are sure you do not do it from any corrupt motives; we are sure you are quite honest and sincere in your changes—but still we have no confidence in you as Ministers?" [Mr. Shaw: Hear, hear.] The hon. and learned Recorder went farther than any; he called the Ministers, with whom up to that hour he was in the habit of associating both as friends and Ministers, political cowards; he told the right hon. Baronet he had no confidence in such political cowardice as his. Well, if that were so, why not come forward at once with a vote of want of confidence in the Ministry, a vote of censure upon the Treasury bench? Such a course would be manly, intelligible, and Parliamentary. It would be Parliamentary; for hon. Gentlemen opposite took that course in 1841 on the Address. It was proposed to meddle with exactly the same questions as now, namely, the commercial interests of the country; and what was the Amendment then moved and carried? That a Government which meddled with such questions as corn and commerce ought not to have the confidence of that House. Thus it ran:—

"We assure your Majesty that we are deeply sensible of the importance of those considerations to which your Majesty has been graciously pleased to direct our attention, in reference to the commerce and revenue of the country, and to the laws which regulate the trade in corn; that in deciding the course which it may be advisable to pursue with reference to such matters, it will be our earnest desire to consult the interest and promote the welfare of all classes of your Majesty's subjects; that we feel it, however, to be our duty humbly to submit to your Majesty that it is essential to the satisfactory results of our deliberations upon these and other matters of public concern that your Majesty's Government should possess the confidence of this House and of the country; and respectfully to represent to your Majesty that confidence is not reposed in the present advisers of your Majesty."

That was the manly, straightforward course taken in 1841. Why did not hon. Gentlemen opposite do the same thing now? [Sir J. Tyrrell: Because you would not support us.] "I won't support you!" (said the hon. Member); how do you know I would not support you? I never told you I should or I should not; and what right have you to assume that I should not? Why not try it like honest men, and leave the country to judge between us? [Sir J. Tyrrell: I meant that your party would not support us.] I have no party but that of the country." The fact was (the hon. Member continued), that hon. Gentlemen opposite dared not face the opinion of the country. But what did they do? They went on casting all sorts of abuse and obloquy on the Government; they charged them with perfidy and treason. Treason to whom? What would they have had the right hon. Baronet do under the circumstances—the peculiar circumstances—in which he was placed in November last? The right hon. Baronet had told the House—he had explained to them—in the estimation of the public honourably to himself—the course he had thought proper to pursue on that occasion. He resigned. Were hon. Gentlemen opposite prepared to take the Government? Mr. Gladstone, in his address to the electors of Newark, told them that those who were against the relaxation of protection were not prepared to form a Government. The noble Lord the Member for London was empowered to form an Administration; but he failed, for some reason or other. The Protectionists wanted courage; the Whigs wanted concord: what was the right hon. Baronet to do? They would, of course, admit that there must be some Government in the country. If that was so, how was the country to be governed, except in the way that the right hon. Baronet proposed? He was prepared, even if there had been no one to follow him, so to act that Her Majesty should be able to meet Her Parliament. He wished the noble Lord had done the same. He wished the noble Lord had come to that House, if even he had had only ten men to follow him. Public opinion would have carried him through, as it would the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. Treason! to whom? To the Queen? To the people? To his own honour?—No! Treason, perhaps, to Toryism! But, what did that mean? Why, that he had preferred the interests of a great nation to the ignorant prejudices of a party. There was but one treason of which the right hon. Baronet could now be guilty—that was, treason to the people and the country, by vacillating in the course he had marked out for himself. That was the only treason of which the right hon. Baronet could now be guilty. Hon. Gentlemen opposite might say the country was with them; but where was the proof? Where was protection in the West Riding of Yorkshire? Its voice was still there. Where was it yesterday at Westminster? Was any protection candidate put forth in Westminster? For himself, he did not think it signified one straw which of the hon. Gentlemen was successful in that contest. Where was the protection candidate? Why did he not hoist the flag of protection at Covent-garden? If they had, the candidate might have stood up to his knees in native cabbages and talked of protection. They were told, however, that the tenants-at-will and the clergy were up in arms, and the hon. Baronet the Member for the University of Oxford told them that the clergy and the Church were dreadfully alarmed. He said that the tithe interest was not taken care of in the measure, and that the interest of the Church was not taken care of. But he had not told them why. He did not give any reason why those interests were in danger. It was singular that, whenever anything was going to be done for the good of the people, some Gentlemen always got up in that House, and cried out, "You don't remember the Church!" Why, the clergy were no more necessarily associated with tithe than the Church meant religion. Why? Because one-half of the Church belonged to lay impropriators. Still it was said that the clergy were up in arms against the measure. As for the tenant-farmers, he did not think they cared a straw about it; if they could vote by ballot they would vote for the measure. But under the 50*l.* tenant-at-will clause they were compelled to vote at the will of their landlords. Talking of tithe, he had an authority on the subject which he thought would dispense with some of the alarm which was said to exist among the clergy on that account. He contended that the titheowner, whether clerical or lay, had no right to complain; and the authority on which he said this was one to which the hon. Baronet (Sir R. Inglis), would, he was sure, pay the greatest attention. It was a charge of the Bishop of Rochester in 1837, immediately after the Tithe Commutation Bill passed. If he rightly understood the argument of the

hon. Baronet (Sir R. Inglis), it was that the Legislature had by that Act entered into a compact with the Church to the effect, that tithe should not be thereafter prejudiced by any act of the Legislature; but that this measure for the repeal of the Corn Laws would so prejudice tithe. He had sometimes voted with the hon. Baronet, though on very different principles. He did so on the occasion of that Bill, and he did so against the Maynooth Bill; but on the voluntary principle, while the hon. Baronet voted on the high church principle. The same was the case on the Tithe Bill. In opposing that Bill, he (Mr. Duncombe) then argued that it was most unjust to the landlord, if changes were to be made, especially in the Corn Laws, to fix him by the enactments of the Tithe Bill. He also argued, that if the Corn Laws were repealed, certain light lands must be thrown out of cultivation, while the landlords would be saddled with a rent-charge out of all just proportion. He also argued that the Bill gave tithe a right and claim on land which it had never had before. It gave tithe a prior claim to all other charges on land. Previously the titheowner had no lien on land, but only a personal claim, if the party owing the tithe refused to pay it. But the Tithe Commutation Bill made the tithe a positive rent-charge, and one which the light lands, under the repeal of the Corn Laws, would be unable to pay. Now, what was the opinion of the Bishop of Rochester? He referred not merely to the Tithe Bill, but also to that for the registration of births, deaths, and marriages. He said:—

"Taking into account the state of political parties in the country, the Tithe Bill may be considered to be as favourable an arrangement towards the clergy of a very difficult question as could have been expected. Happily for the Church, a powerful and influential body of the laity were also holders of tithe property to a very large amount, and were as much interested in a fair settlement of the question as we were; the clergy, therefore, in this instance, have experienced a greater degree of justice than has been extended towards them in the discussion of other subjects connected with their temporal affairs."

Now, generally it was not considered Parliamentary to impute motives. If he had said what was here said, it would have been called a Radical opinion; but, as it came from a bishop, of course it was quite orthodox. Yet it imported that, self-interest being mixed up in the question, a better arrangement had been obtained than would have been got if there had been no such interest. The bishop went on to say—

"The criterion which has been fixed upon to determine the future value of the tithes is also considered by some persons, whose opinions are entitled to great weight, as a dangerous and delusive arrangement, which will hereafter lead to great diminution in the property of the Church; and it is said that any considerable decrease in the value or quantity of the articles which may have been fixed upon to regulate the future relative value of the tithes, would produce the evils here anticipated; but it must be remembered, that as the incomes of the clergy were derived under the old system from the articles of produce, they would equally have been affected by, under any circumstances, a diminution in their quantity or value. I am not, therefore, disposed to think that any just cause for alarm exists on this point."

Surely that authority ought to be satisfactory to the hon. Baronet. It was the charge of the Bishop of Rochester in 1837, and was reported in *The Times* newspaper; and unless the hon. Baronet was prepared to state that the sliding-scale, like tithe, was of divine origin, he thought that the clergy, or the titheowners, had no reason to complain of the repeal of the Corn Laws. The only argument used by the hon. Gentleman opposite in defence of this measure, which had given him pain, was that which was involved in the reference to the occurrences of the year 1842. He did think that those occurrences ought to have been kept completely out of sight on the present occasion. He could easily understand hon. Gentleman opposite, the right hon. Baronet, for instance, despairing and desponding as to making any impression on the reason of some of the hon. Gentlemen who sat on the same side, and, therefore, thinking it necessary to appeal to their fears. But he conceived, that when they did so appeal to their fears, they ought, at the same time, to have done justice to the other side of the House. They ought to have recollected, that in 1842, when those dreadful occurrences took place, and when there was every symptom and appearance of considerable tumult and confusion in the country—they ought to have recollected that, previous to that, continual Motions were made on that (the Opposition) side of the House, involving exactly the same principles as those now advanced by Her Majesty's Ministers; and that those Ministers were told, over and over again, that if they could but give effect to those sound principles of commercial policy, more particularly as regarded the food of the people, they would thereby put an end to all the confusion and distress in the country. He had himself, at the end of July, on that occasion, moved an Address to the Crown, which was, after all, looking to the force of the

party opposite, negatived but by a slight majority, praying Her Majesty, if the measure then resorted to did not remove the distress, to call Parliament together, and give greater effect to the principles which had been entered on. That Motion was rejected; but now they were told that those were measures which hereafter would prevent such distress and confusion as then existed. If such measures would now prevent the recurrence of such distress, he had a right to say that they would have prevented it on that occasion, and would have relieved the right hon. Baronet opposite from the necessity of then vindicating the measure which the right hon. Baronet seemed—he would not say—to glory in, of sending down a regiment of Guards and a park of artillery to the manufacturing districts. If a measure like that now proposed had been then brought forward, there would have been no necessity for the guards and artillery, but contentment and peace would have been restored to the manufacturing districts. It was impossible to say, by such a measure, what misery and what sufferings might not have been spared, and what crime might not have been prevented! But, thank God, whoever might be the rulers of this country, they ruled over a loyal, peaceable, honest, and forgiving people. The people did forget and forgive the errors then perpetrated; and all that Parliament could do now was to pass this measure as quickly and as sincerely as they could, giving the people no cause to look back to those days which were gone. There was a certain question put that evening to the right hon. Baronet by the hon. Member for Norfolk, and also another by a noble Lord, with respect to the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws; and the right hon. Baronet had been told, that if he thought it necessary for the safe carrying of the measure, no Gentleman on that (the Opposition) side of the House would support any measure for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. The right hon. Baronet had stated that he thought the provision as proposed by himself with respect to the Corn Laws, to be the most desirable, but that, if it were the sincere wish of the hon. Gentlemen sitting on the (protection) benches near him that protection should altogether cease, he and the rest of the House would be but too happy to accommodate them. But there was another part of this measure to which he wished to call the attention of the right hon. Baronet, in connexion with the question put by the hon. Member for Norfolk. When this measure was proposed, they were told to take it as a whole. Now, he would tell the House that part of the measure which, after all, was and would prove the most valuable to the operative classes in the manufacturing districts, was that part which made the great and important change in the law of settlement. He declared, that if they struck out that part of the measure, and if the Ministers did not pledge themselves as much to that portion as they did to that part relating to the Corn Laws, the measure would be valueless in the eyes of the operative classes in the manufacturing districts. The right hon. Baronet had said that evening, that he did not intend to press that part to which he was now alluding, until the part relating to articles of food and clothing was concluded in that House; but there was an idea getting abroad—he mentioned it, though he hoped it might not prove true—that in some of these great manufacturing towns it was intended by certain parties to offer a very strong and powerful opposition to that portion of the measure to which he adverted; and that the language used was, "Let us get the Corn Law part of the question settled, and then we will deal with the law of settlement." He warned the House, that if they did not pass this part of the measure, there would be an agitation in the country which would render the measure completely valueless; and he called on the Ministers to give an assurance that they did consider that portion as part and parcel of the measure. The proposed provision to which he alluded was, that which, having a retrospective effect, made a five years' industrial residence give a settlement in the towns where the operatives resided. [Sir R. Peel: A right to relief.] Well, a right to relief. What he contended for was, that those towns should be saddled with the expense of that relief. Supposing that such a law had existed in 1842, did they suppose that there would have been half or quarter of the crime, misery, and distress that then prevailed? What occurred at Stockport at that time? It was notorious that 3,000 houses there were vacant and empty at that time, which had been occupied by men paying 2*s*. 6*d*. a week rent. What became of all those unfortunate persons? They were obliged to tramp and travel through all parts of the country. A great number were Irish, and they were cruelly and with the greatest inhumanity sent back

to Ireland by those capitalists whose property they had helped to create. He understood that at the present moment nearly two-thirds of the operative population of Manchester were not entitled to relief from those persons whose fortunes they had made. What was the result? These poor persons, with their wives and children, were sent back to their country parishes, and when they arrived there, what happened? They were disowned by their parish; a small sum was offered to them to go away, and seek employment elsewhere; and they were sent tramping about the country—the whole world scorning them—no one having regard for them; as if they were only worthy to starve. Was it then to be wondered at that these persons commit crime? They might declaim about discontent, disaffection, and sedition, if they chose so to call it; but who would not be disaffected under such circumstances? Was it surprising that crime was committed by persons hungry and tramping throughout the country, when the only prospect for the termination of the misery of those unfortunate victims of the detestable system of the law of settlement was death or the hulks? He did hope, therefore, to hear from Ministers, that they considered that portion of their measure relating to the law of settlement to be essential. He did not ask it as a compensation to the agricultural interest, although it would be a boon to them; but it would also be a great act of justice to the operatives in the manufacturing districts. For those reasons it would be necessary to look after this part of the measure with a very jealous eye; but he believed that the Ministers were sincerely desirous of carrying every part of the measure. Having said so much, he would conclude by giving his cordial support, both in that House and out of it, to the Ministerial measure; believing, as he did, that it was calculated not only to extend our commerce, and to benefit agriculture, but also to improve the social and political condition of the people; and, above all things, to enlist in favour of our common country the good will, friendly feeling, and respect of all the civilized world. With respect to that portion of the House commonly called the agricultural interest, he really did believe that as soon as this protection, so degrading to and unworthy of them, should have been removed, they would be the first to acknowledge that their apprehensions were unfounded; and when they saw trade flourishing, employment plentiful, prices ranging high and steady, rates reduced, and the value of their estates not depreciated, he did hope that they would readily admit that all their alarm had been without just cause, and would regret the error in which they had so long and pertinaciously persevered.

Sir T. ACLAND was very glad, as a Member of that body which was the subject of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, to have an opportunity of responding, as he hoped many others could, with the utmost sincerity, to the last appeal which that hon. Gentleman had made to the agricultural interest. If they found they were the advocates of error, though it was an error which they had shared in common with many others much their superiors in ability, and which had been received as truth for generations—if they found that a course contrary to that hitherto pursued was really fraught with blessings, he did believe that, one and all, they would not only acknowledge their error, but cheerfully acquiesce in the decision of Parliament; and whether the measure of the right hon. Baronet proved to be for the immediate advantage of the country or not—whether they were called upon to meet that measure as a benefit or as a misfortune, they would, above all, do their duty to their country and to the interest with which they were connected, so that the legislation now in prospect might not be turned to the injury of either. But when the hon. Gentleman used the epithets "ignorant and bigoted," in speaking of the agriculturists, he begged to remind the hon. Gentleman, of what indeed the hon. Gentleman had unconsciously shown he recollected, that they had an excuse for their error. The hon. Gentleman had reminded them that they were merely continuing in the belief which had been propagated, and persevering in the advocacy of that law which had been passed in 1842, by the very persons who now proposed its repeal, whom the hon. Gentleman described as being the first to discern the new light, and who now, for the first time, propounded in that House those great truths which he charitably allowed that the party he had attacked were yet incapable of seeing. For one, he acknowledged that such was his unhappy fate; and he hoped the House would give him credit for sincerity when he assured them that never, since he first took his seat in Parliament, that is, in 1812, more than thirty years ago, had he endea-

voured with greater anxiety to ascertain the course which it was right he should take. He had never been a supporter of extreme protection. He had welcomed the measure proposed in 1842 by his right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel), which presented itself to the agricultural interest as a great reduction on the protection they had long enjoyed. Neither had he made any difficulty about the Tariff, nor as to the appendix in the shape of the Bill for admitting Canadian grain, or any of the other sequences of the Corn Bill of 1842. In every respect in which he found his right hon. Friend fairly carrying out the principles of that measure, he gave him the most cordial support. But there was a difference between the conduct of Government then and now. He supported them at that time, because they pursued a policy which was necessary to the due fulfilment of their duty in securing a constant supply of grain for the country. There was no free trader then so mad as to maintain that he should secure that constant supply principally by importation. It was by means of a moderate protection that such a supply could alone be secured; such was the purpose for which it had been maintained, and certainly it was not intended to secure high prices of grain for the benefit of a class. The Corn Law had not for its object, directly or indirectly, the raising of prices. In 1815, that great authority, Sir H. Parnell, directed attention to the difficulties which would attend the transition from a state of war to peace. The matter was taken up by the Government. The price of wheat had been as high as 120*s*. It was necessary for the security of agriculture, in reference to the security of the consumer, that some means should be taken to obviate the difficulties which had been suggested; and it was then determined to secure agriculture from competition up to the price of 80*s*. The principle on which protection was kept up was fully recognised in the modifications which the law subsequently underwent. The first form of protection was found inconvenient, and the plan of a sliding-scale was adopted in 1828. The duties were made to range so that the foreigner should not be able to compete on the average with the home-grower at a price below 64*s*. In 1842 the right hon. Baronet lowered the pivot price, so that the competition should commence between 54*s*. and 58*s*. Prices which were maintained at 80*s*., in 1815, gradually dropped to 56*s*., as was shown by the average taken under the Tithe Commutation Act, namely, 7*s*. a bushel. It was their domestic agriculture which had brought prices down from 10*s*. to 7*s*. a bushel. His right hon. Friend, in his admirable displays of eloquence, which he was sorry to say had not brought entire conviction to his mind, did not explain, as he thought, what were the large grounds on which the decisions of the Government were said to rest. The whole country was in expectation of the disclosure of those indisputable reasons which had influenced a man who had shown greater judgment in the administration of public affairs than any Minister he had ever known. The right hon. Gentleman did nothing to show that he was right, but had made some of his ablest efforts to put others in the wrong. That was not assigning reasons. That was not what Mr. Huskisson would have done. The right hon. Baronet had said that there were three reasons of policy and one of justice on which the general system of protection was maintained, and had argued ably, though not in all points quite fairly, against them; but he had not attempted to grapple with or even discuss the *dictum* of Mr. Huskisson, which was the only basis of justification on which the course so long pursued by the Legislature in dealing with this question, could be rested — that it was absolutely necessary for such a country as this not to be dependent for the existence of her people upon foreign countries. Mr. Huskisson said, "Let corn be as cheap as you please, provided only it be of domestic growth." That was the rule laid down in every speech of Mr. Huskisson, of Mr. Canning, and of the right hon. Baronet. The basis of every law since 1815 had been, that there should be as much protection to domestic agriculture as should enable them, not exclusively, but fully, to raise their supply from their own soil. This they would command, when, in many cases, as, for instance, war, they could not command the produce of foreign countries. In scanty harvests, also, on the Continent, foreign Governments would find, as they frequently had found it, their duty —even during the present year—to secure a supply to their own subjects first, and prohibit the export to this country. In all this debate it was remarkable that this, the essential and mainspring of the whole argument, had not been touched; it had not been touched in either of the speeches of the right hon. Gentleman. Thus the House was left to discover as it

might what were the ample grounds which had arisen in the last three years for reversing the legislation of thirty years preceding, a legislation more or less maintained by every Government and every leading statesman of the country up to the 1st of November, 1845, as well as by each successive Government and Parliament. Even the noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell), when he made his fatal proposition in the celebrated Budget of 1841, had acknowledged the principle of protection; upon that proposition his Government was overthrown; still it contained in the fixed duty of 8*s.* the principle of protection. The agriculturists did not wish for high prices; how could they wish to see their countrymen suffering from scarcity and famine? They were not like the manufacturers, who, employing large masses of men, could tell them on a Saturday night that they did not require them. They had to keep their labourers all the year round; and, in the course of twenty or thirty years, connexions of common interest and humanity were formed. The agriculturist did not want high duties at the time of high prices; at a period of high price a fixed duty of 8*s.* could not be held; but at a time of low prices a glut might come under the system of free trade, prices would be too much depressed, and a great degree of agricultural distress would be created. That was the plain fact, and if the agriculturists did not receive a remuneration for the investment of their capital, it was impossible they could continue to furnish an adequate supply. He wished to draw attention to the different conditions of the manufacturer compared with the farmer, in another point of view. When the manufacturers had established their mills and machinery, and made a successful venture, it was not impossible they might be repaid their outlay in a year; if their returns were hazardous, they were also good; and when a period of depression came, if their credit was sound, their machinery was always ready; they could quickly command labourers, should large orders come in from abroad, to start again at a week's notice, and before a year was out they reaped their harvest. But with the agriculturist it was otherwise—he required a much longer period to ensure his returns—his capital and labour must lie in the ground for years, before the soil would yield back her abundance; he must then stand the risk of the harvests; and with any continuance of adverse circumstances, it must require a long period for him to recover the original cost of his outlay; and if to effect this he should abate his exertions, and rack and impoverish the ground, any one knew that a fresh tenant must begin the same long and patient course again, and that it would require three or four years even to get the ground in heart. This was a reason as much for the public interest, as for justice to the agriculturist, why, if they were considering the apportionment of protection, as they were unfortunately considering its total abandonment, agriculture should have a fair protection. If a scanty harvest and scanty supply tempted a large quantity of corn from abroad at the moment when estates were going back both in value and cultivation, they would find themselves in the unhappy situation which it had been the object of all the legislation of the last thirty years to guard against. The farmers, however, had believed that the settlement made in 1842 was a permanent one, and had made increased efforts in a reliance upon that law; had spent more capital, and introduced more skill, in the cultivation of the soil than before. Now his right hon. Friend had himself alluded to this happy state of agriculture at the present moment, and told them that its prosperity did not depend on the price of wheat: assuredly not — it depended on plenty as well as price, and plenty was the far better source of prosperity of the two. His right hon. Friend gave as the fall of prices for the last forty years the following statement. In the ten years ending in 1815, the price of wheat was 97*s.* 6*d.* per quarter; and they would also find that for the five years ending in 1814 the prices averaged between 105*s.* and 106*s.* Since then prices had gradually fallen; and in the ten years ending 1825 the average price of wheat was 56*s.* 7*d.*; in the ten years ending 1835 it was 57*s.* 4*d.*; and for the last four years it had been 51*s.* In thirty years, therefore, the price of wheat had been reduced one-half. Then, said his right hon. Friend, how can you say your prosperity depends on price? But he (Sir T. Acland) was disposed to ask rather, how can you say the effect of protection has been to inflict and keep up a high price of corn as against the consumer? This was his answer to those who charged the landlords with maintaining a law which made the food of the people dear, in order to serve their own interests; and instead of rendering railing for railing, this should be his answer to

the speech of the hon. Member for Durham, and all other such speeches which he or others might make in that House, or elsewhere. He was, however, happy to acknowledge the much improved tone of the last speech of that hon. Member, bereft as it was of much of the vituperative language which had too long characterized them—he hoped that it was an indication of the benefit they might derive from his acuteness and talent on a better occasion. But further. A printed paper was sent to him by post the other morning, by a gentleman who approved the measure of the right hon. Baronet, and who was evidently an advocate of free trade, in which a comparison was made between the exports and imports in the three years, 1822, 1823, and 1824, and the three years 1842, 1843, and 1844. The official value of the imports in the former period was about 35,000,000*l.*; while in the latter period it was 70,000,000*l.* The exports during the same period had increased in a similar proportion; and the number and tonnage of our shipping in a still greater. These statistics showed that the traffic of the mercantile community had doubled during the period he had mentioned, while the price of corn had diminished one-half. Every one who heard or read these statements must admit that the Corn Law had worked well for the whole population. It had worked well for the agriculturists, who were satisfied with it, who were thankful for it, and who desired its continuance; and it had worked equally well for the exporters and consumers. What more could they desire? He would like to know what circumstances had occurred since the adoption of the law of 1842 to justify the measure now proposed by the right hon. Baronet? He must say, that he saw none which ought to induce him to resign his judgment to that of any other person; but he would continue to support the law of 1842, until he was convinced that an alteration was necessary. He asked, then, what circumstances had occurred between 1842 and 1846 to justify the proposed change? As one reason for his present proposition, the right hon. Baronet had told them, with a warmth of feeling which such a subject would naturally excite in the heart either of a man or a Minister, that a lamentable scarcity of provisions was anticipated in Ireland. He thought he could dispose of that point by repeating what had been stated by several hon. Members on Tuesday night, that if the right hon. Baronet had come down on the first day of the Session, and had proposed a suspension of the Corn Law for the temporary exigency, Parliament would have passed the measure within a week, had it been requisite. Had the right hon. Baronet or his Colleagues thought fit, on the 1st of November, on their own responsibility, to suspend the law, he was convinced not a single voice would have been raised against such a proceeding; but that it would have been approved and sanctioned by Parliament. But the right hon. Baronet had not taken this course. He was grieved to say that the right hon. Gentleman had united to a proposal, which might have been clear and simple, the most litigated question of the present day. He remembered that, on one occasion, the Government of the noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) was involved in a similar difficulty, but did not get out of it. They attached to the settlement of the Tithe question in Ireland, which many hon. Gentlemen among their opponents would have assisted them to arrange on fair terms, a most indefensible condition, to which the House would not consent—he alluded to the Appropriation Clause. This was just the course which the right hon. Baronet had taken in the present instance. The right hon. Gentleman had frankly told them that on the 1st of November he proposed to his Colleagues to open the ports, in order to meet the fearful evil which was anticipated, and that he still wished he had done so. He and many of his hon. friends entertained the same wish. But the right hon. Baronet also said, "I told my Colleagues fairly that the step of opening the ports would involve a reconsideration of the existing Corn Law." "By such a measure," said the right hon. Baronet, "we shall adopt the principle of free trade. I believe that if you once open the ports you never can shut them again. Therefore, when I make to you the proposition of opening the ports, as a means of remedying or preventing the dreadful evil of a famine, you are to understand that it involves—if it be in my hands—the contemporaneous change of our former policy." Could the right hon. Baronet be surprised that, under such circumstances, he found but three Members of the Cabinet supporting him? Could he be surprised that he (Sir T. Acland) and those who entertained similar opinions on this question, should think now that, with a sincere determination to do his duty

to the suffering people of Ireland, the right hon. Baronet found the occasion too tempting to be suffered to pass without endeavouring to carry out at the same time a foregone conclusion? The right hon. Baronet had not told them when the change in his opinions took place; but he did not think that so great an alteration could have taken place in the opinions of the right hon. Gentleman—a man remarkable for prudence and sagacity—within a recent period. What he complained of was, that the right hon. Baronet, even when warned by the differences which existed in the Cabinet, did not separate the two branches of this question, at least in point of time; and acting upon his own discretion, with the concurrence of the Cabinet, adopt at once some prompt measures to relieve pressing distress, leaving it to the good sense of Parliament to determine afterwards whether the time had arrived for an alteration of the Corn Law. Admitting the great evils which might result from the failure of the potato crop, he thought the right hon. Baronet had done them injustice in preventing them from sanctioning with one heart and one voice, as he believed they would have done, such measures as might have been deemed advisable for alleviating the anticipated distress. But, indeed, the proposed law was not the most direct and effectual relief of that distress. In the first place, several months had been lost in point of time; and whatever difference there might be between entirely open ports and the reduced duty to be enacted under the new law, that difference there would be against the right hon. Baronet's plan, in comparison with the immediate and temporary suspension. Or, again, why might they not have released from bond the large quantity of corn now in the ports? The hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. T. Baring) had told them that it was above a million of quarters. Why, on the assumption that one quarter is consumed by each individual in a year (though it does not, in fact, amount to that), the corn now in bond would, if let out, supply the whole four millions whom the right hon. Baronet had described to be in danger of starvation for the next four months before harvest, for at least three out of those four months; and was not this a high tribute to the principle of a law which, at a remarkable period, when some scarcity and high prices prevailed over the greater part of Europe, had provided such a resource as this at our disposal; and that, even with the general prices of the home market, exceedingly moderate. The truth was, that under the present law relative to corn and provisions, the agriculturists had been induced to make exertions such as were made in no other country; and now, by the sudden and unlooked for, unjust, and unnecessary alteration, they would be forced to run the risk of great disappointment and injury. If, however, the law should be repealed, he would not give way to alarm, or encourage discontent. On the contrary, he would do his best to keep up the hearts of his agricultural friends. He had already told them in his own county, that the best way to take advantage of a good law was to improve their estates to the greatest possible degree; and, on the same principle, he deemed the wisest way of meeting a bad law was by redoubling their exertions. Such was his general view of the merits of the scheme, and he was not prepared to accept it at the hands of the right hon. Baronet. He could not in three short weeks read backwards the lesson which the right hon. Baronet and he had together learned in the same school for the last thirty years, the one indeed as the teacher, and he himself as the humble follower. His adherence to his principles might be deemed bigotry; but as he acted on conviction he acted confidently, and should continue to do so till he was convinced that the maintenance of such a course was hopeless. What, indeed, was the reason for the change that had come over them—what the cause? Why, first, the Anti-Corn-Law League, and its quarter of a million fund. But by the first subscription of 100,000*l.*, and by the second of 250,000*l.*, had not the League shown that if those engaged in manufactures could in so short a time collect together so large a sum to be spent in such a political game or conflict as this, they had very little need to complain of the existing state of things? And, for his part, he thought that that agitation alone would have been easily put down by firm and resolute men, unless, indeed, they had some misgivings about the real merits of the case. The noble Lord the Member for London had been the next to move overtly in the matter; and, to tell the truth, he had the best right to do so, for he had only to make one step forward, while the right hon. Baronet had to make an entire change in his policy. But it appeared to him, that even his noble Friend the Member for London, with the support of the Opposition and the League united, should not

have been strong enough to thwart or terrify a Minister, with a strong party at his back, who had been able four years before, with smaller numbers, to defeat his noble Friend and his principles, and to keep them on the Opposition side of the House ever since. If that Minister had been firm, that party would have been sufficient for his support. But, unfortunately, they had now the opinion of the Minister himself also against them; but not the authority of the united opinion of his Government. His first proposition had been supported by only three Members of his Cabinet; and, on its repetition on the 26th November, the majority was still against him, and so the Government was broken up. It was resumed, indeed, nobly, and in a most praiseworthy manner, that Her Majesty and the country might not be left without a Government. But that only proved that the previous majority of the Cabinet felt the absence of a Government a greater evil than the repeal of the Corn Laws. He (Sir T. Acland), therefore, could not add to the weight of the force against him the authority of an unbiassed united Cabinet on the question; and he, therefore, would not surrender his judgment upon it, notwithstanding the great difficulty and improbability of effectively maintaining it. He had had serious communication with many agriculturists in his county on the subject of the anticipated changes, previous to the meeting of Parliament, and had always told them that he should think it his duty, when he knew what the measure was to be, to view it most dispassionately, and to consider it over and over again, in all its bearings, and with a view to all its consequences, before he came to any conclusion as to his own course. He had done so most anxiously, and also reflected on the danger which might arise from sending such a question as this back to the country. He did not complain of those who, similarly circumstanced, came to a different conclusion from his own, as did his noble Friend the Member for Liverpool; for he fully believed that, when a large portion of the people had continued for a length of time to demand any particular measure, and the Minister of the Crown had once pledged the Government to grant it, that measure, sooner or later, was pretty sure to be carried, and therefore he could well understand the difficulty felt by many persons as to the wisdom and propriety of a protracted resistance. He should, however, hold his own course; all the responsibilities were with his right hon. Friend. But he would join in no vexatious opposition—he would be no party to worrying the measure. He would not, indeed, yield to the League, as the noble Lord or the Minister himself; but if the House of Commons should sanction, by a full majority, the measure proposed by the Crown, he (Sir T. Acland) would give his right hon. Friend no unnecessary trouble. If, indeed, the very first division should be what is called a close one, then no one knew better than his hon. Friend, that he could have no hope of getting his bill through the present Parliament, and the sooner he sent them all to the right-about the better—a great evil, no doubt; but that, like the other responsibilities, must rest with his right hon. Friend—but he must not expect other men to lend him their shoulders to get him out of his false position. He (Sir T. Acland), for one, as an old Member of Parliament, did not think his right hon. Friend had a right to call on him to submit to a necessity entirely of his own creation.

LORD A. PAGET had listened with a good deal of attention to the debate as it had gone on, and he confessed he thought that a good many Gentlemen had been rather hard upon the right hon. Gentleman. He was convinced that nothing but a sense of public duty could have induced the right hon. Baronet to have brought forward the present measure. He had been at the head of a large and a united party; now, whether he went east, west, north, or south, nothing but the renegade Minister was talked about. He thought that the right hon. Baronet was one of the greatest instances of sacrifices of self that had ever been made from conscientious motives. He quite agreed that the noble Lord the Member for London would have been the proper person to have brought forward this Motion. He had had the honour of supporting the noble Lord since he had been in Parliament, and he hoped that he should long have that pleasure; his undoubted bravery and manly straightforward conduct entitled him to their highest regards. He should give the right hon. Gentleman's measure his most cordial support. He had belonged for several years to that forlorn hope which went out annually with his hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers); but now he was glad to say that their position was altered. He had always agreed that no law could regulate the price of wages; admitting that axiom, he

said also that no law should regulate the price of food. The Corn Laws were near their end. His family derived their income from corn, and he knew that the head of it apprehended no danger from the repeal of the law; therefore, though he should support the measure of the right hon. Baronet, yet he must express a hope that it would not be long ere they should have a complete repeal of the Corn Laws.

Mr. BINGHAM BARING said, the hon. Member for Devonshire had expressed the opinion that, sooner or later, this question would be carried. He should like to ask the hon. Baronet how much longer he wished the question to be agitated? Did he remember the Reform Bill? Did he know that if it had been settled betimes, they would never have had the heartburnings which had followed it? Did he remember the Catholic Relief Bill? The measure of Emancipation began under Pitt as a party squabble; but at last it grew into a national quarrel, and God only knew where that quarrel would end! And did he wish that this subject, which at present was a mere topic disputed in clubs—did he wish that it should sink into men's hearts, and become a contest of classes—classes of property and of intelligence, each appealing to the passions and the prejudices of the people? Let them look at the history of the Corn Laws. He would not go back to those times when the Corn Laws were rather intended to regulate exports than imports—when they prevented the producer from selling in the dearest market, rather than the consumer from buying in the cheapest; but he would go at once to 1815. Previous to that, in the period of war, prices had risen, and a difficulty was found to provide food for the people. The landed interest was encouraged by all classes to invest their money in extending the cultivation of the poor lands. When peace came, and with it an influx of foreign corn, the nation, acting freely, and with the consent of all the leading statesmen of the day—the nation willingly consented to take upon itself the burden of the Corn Laws; and with a view to prevent the land going out of cultivation, and the labourer being thrown out of employment, these laws had been continued to the present day. But could they still be justified on that plea? That was the question. Could it be proved that it was now impossible to dispense with protection? He denied that it could. He thought he could prove that they might now dispense with protection; and if he could prove that, he was certain that the highminded gentry of England would not insist upon its being continued. In 1836, they had a Committee upon agricultural distress. At that time, they had some of the ablest and most intelligent tenant-farmers before them giving evidence. The Scotch farmers admitted that they might meet foreign competition. The English farmers thought they could not: in the first place, on account of the burden of tithes; and at that time, the House would recollect, tithes had not been commuted; but whatever capital was expended on land, one-tenth of the profits were paid over to the titheowner. How, then, was it possible for the English farmer to compete with the foreigner on fair grounds, when that by which alone he could succeed—the power and influence of his capital—was thus swamped. But since that period the tithes had been commuted. Then there was another objection. They said they could easily cultivate the good lands, but the wet sour clay lands required protection; and, besides, they were in many cases without good access to markets. But what had since taken place? The railways that were now extending over the country afforded every facility for the farmer bringing his produce to market; chemical and artificial manures might be distributed through the country by the same means; while the drainage, which was now carried on to so great an extent, brought the wet lands into good condition; so that all the objections of the tenant-farmers were now removed, and the landed gentry found that their crops were doubled. The present measure must be looked upon in the light of an appeal to the justice of the landed interest, and no doubt it would be considered satisfactory.

Debate again adjourned.

House adjourned at a quarter past Twelve o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Friday, February 20, 1846.

Minutes.] Public Bills.—1ª. Protection of Life (Ireland) (No. 2).

Petitions Presented. From Owners and Occupiers of Land, and others, interested in the Welfare of Agriculture, in the Township of Crambe, and several other places, in favour of the Corn Laws.—From Inhabitants of Oulston, and several other places, for the Adoption of a Measure to prevent the Unconstitutional Proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, in relation to the Corn Laws.—From the Township of Hutton Low Cross, and several other places, for Protection to the Agricultural Interest.

MINISTERS' MONEY (IRELAND).

LORD CAMPBELL, in pursuance of Notice, presented to their Lordships a petition of very great importance. The petition was from the inhabitants of the city of Cork, and emanated from a public meeting called for the purpose in that city. It was signed by the mayor, all the aldermen, and so large a number of the inhabitants, that the postage of the petition, as charged to him (Lord Campbell), amounted to 8*l.*, which, by the liberality of the Government, and the noble Earl opposite (the Earl of St. Germans) had been remitted. The petitioners, after alluding to the pledge solemnly given by the Monarch in both Houses of Parliament, that Irish grievances should be redressed, ventured to lay before the House what they considered a very great evil—the payment of what was called "Ministers' Money" in Ireland. Now, so little was that subject known in England, that, since he had entered the House, he had been asked by a noble Peer of very great information and intelligence, whether the petition was against the *Regium Donum* given by the Crown to the Presbyterian Dissenters in Ireland. The petitioners did not at all interfere with that, and, as far as he was aware, they by no means wished that that grant should be intercepted or diminished; but their desire was to lay before the House a very heavy grievance, personal and peculiar to themselves. In the reign of Charles II., what he (Lord Campbell) must consider a very arbitrary Act was passed, by which the inhabitants of certain corporate towns in Ireland were subjected to a personal tax for the maintenance of the ministers of the Episcopal Protestant religion in that country. He (Lord Campbell) insisted upon it—subject to any answer which might be given to the statement—that it was a personal tax. It was not all like tithes, which, whether they were or were not a burden upon the land, certainly were no burden upon the landholder, who purchased only nine-tenths of the land, and not the remaining one-tenth, or whatever the proportion might be, and was not in the slightest degree aggrieved by the payment of tithes, which ought to be held for ever sacred. Ministers' Money was a tax upon the inhabitants of the towns, not at all like church rates, which he (Lord Campbell) remembered had, by a noble Lord opposite, been traced back to the time of Canute; but it was a modern tax, placed upon all the inhabitants of towns, whether they were Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Dissenters, or belonging to that very small minority of the country, the Protestant Episcopal Church, who were all compelled to contribute to the maintenance of the Episcopal Protestant pastor within the town. They considered this as a great grievance, because they were obliged to maintain their own pastors, and to support the fabrics where divine worship was performed according to their own tenets. They felt that it was a very heavy charge, but their Lordships would be surprised when he mentioned the small amount in reality. They deemed it, however, an insult that they should be obliged to contribute at all to the maintenance of the Episcopal Protestant clergy in Ireland. But the House were aware that it was considered so great a grievance that almost every successive Secretary for Ireland had admitted it, and expressed his regret that it could not be remedied. He did not remember what the noble Lord opposite had said upon the subject; but the noble Lord near him (the Earl of St. Germans), had, in another place, admitted the grievance, and lamented that he had no means of removing it. The right hon. Gentleman, Sir T. Fremantle, whom he was proud to call his friend, filled the situation of Secretary for Ireland, and he likewise, in his place in the House of Commons, admitted that it was a great grievance, and wished for the means of removing it. The only question, therefore was, whether the Government should not, and if they would not, whether the House should not press upon them to remove that which was considered upon all sides to be a grievance. He (Lord Campbell) was astonished that it was not included in the Church Temporalities Act, when that measure was passed under the auspices of the noble Lord opposite, because the present grievance seemed to be much more obnoxious than that which he considered necessary to remove, for that was more a charge upon property than the Ministers' Money. He believed it was somewhere near 20,000*l.* a year. [A NOBLE LORD: No; 16,000*l.*] He (Lord Campbell) stated that the whole amount of the present tax was only between 13,000*l.* and 14,000*l.* a year. For the sake of that paltry sum all the different religious sects in Ireland were permitted to consider themselves as insulted. He would abstain from saying anything that could be considered at all offensive to the Protestant Church; but he was satisfied that the minister's money had a tendency

to bring that establishment into direct odium. The tax was for ecclesiastical purposes; and any ecclesiastical property that could be discovered applicable to the purpose should be forthwith applied. He trusted that their Lordships would listen favourably to the prayer of the petition. They had been informed by Her Majesty's Ministers that on Monday next they would disclose their policy with regard to Ireland. It would give him (Lord Campbell), along with any measure which might be proposed for the amelioration of the unhappy state of Ireland at the present time, great pleasure to see some remedy for this particular grievance. The declaration that concession had reached its utmost limits to Ireland, had been very handsomely retracted. He believed that the right hon. Gentleman who made that statement was perfectly willing that a grand conflagration should take place in Palace Yard, and that all the volumes of "*Hansard*" should be burned; he himself being ready to apply the torch to the funeral pile. He (Lord Campbell) was sure that the removal of this grievance would have a favourable tendency upon the popular mind. He believed that it might be said of the Ministers' Money—

"My wound is great because it is so small,"

because it had been thought that the tax was held over the heads of the Roman Catholics and Presbyterians there, not for the sake of emolument, but as a mark of their continued degradation.

The EARL of ST. GERMANS admitted that it was a practical grievance, but he differed from the noble Lord when he stated that it was a grievance in principle. The noble and learned Lord had referred to the establishment of the tax in the time of Charles II., and had stated it to be considered a mark of insult and degradation; but he had not adverted to the fact, that at that period the Roman Catholics were not capable of holding property, and, consequently, the tax fell exclusively upon the Protestant inhabitants in those towns. It had only been of comparatively recent date that the Roman Catholics had been capable of holding property; but now, they were capable of so doing, they acquired their houses subject to the payment of that tax—so that in point of principle it was a less strong case than that of tithe. It was, however, unquestionably a great practical grievance; it was leviable on the occupiers, not on the owners of property in towns; and it fell upon the poorer portions of the population. Those parts of the cities that were inhabited by the wealthy people in ancient times, were now inhabited by the lower classes; the rates remained the same as when first imposed; and they were not unfrequently levied by distress, and the goods and chattels of the poor people sold to pay the amount. There were clergymen who could afford to relinquish a portion of their incomes; and the law had consequently not been put in force against these unfortunate people by them; but there were others among the clergy who really could not afford to make such sacrifices, and in such cases the greatest hardship had been inflicted. It was, therefore, most desirable that some remedy should be applied. It was not, however, very easy to find funds out of which that tax could be paid, and it would be necessary to provide some other means for the maintenance of the Protestant clergy in those cities. He had turned his attention to the subject; but when he quitted office his plans were not matured. He was not able to say whether or not Her Majesty's Government were engaged in considering any measure for the removal of this grievance. He admitted it was practically a great grievance; but he denied that it was to be regarded either as an insult or an injury to the people of Ireland.

LORD CAMPBELL felt great satisfaction at what had fallen from the noble Lord who had just sat down; but would not enter into any theoretical discussion as to whether it was or was not a grievance in principle.

Lord STANLEY also differed from the noble Lord as to the Ministers' Money being a personal tax. It was a tax as much to be levied on house property in town, as tithes were upon landed property in the country. It stood precisely on the same footing. It was, in its nature, an *ad valorem* tax charged upon every house within corporate towns, for the maintenance of the clergy in those towns. Exactly in the same manner as the payment of tithes caused a diminished value to be given for landed property, so to that extent did the payment of the fixed amount of Ministers' Money deduct from the value of houses. If they gave any relief, in the shape of throwing the burdens upon the national of any other funds, the relief so given would be, in point of fact, a relief to the large proprietors within the towns from burdens which, when they purchased the property, they perfectly well understood it to be liable. He (Lord Stanley) could not, for

his own part, see why property of that description should be relieved from burdens which the present proprietors and their predecessors had been subjected to ever since the reign of Charles II. The present question was precisely similar to that of tithes, and more especially to that of the commuted tithes. The noble and learned Lord had said that it did not differ from the vestry cess; but this was a payment regulated by law; the vestry cess was a tax fixed by the authorities with the consent of the several parishes in respect to it. But there was this peculiar grievance, that the vestry cess was a tithe charge upon all the inhabitants of the parish, for the purposes of the inhabitants generally, but levied exclusively by the votes of the Protestant inhabitants of the parish. It therefore partook of the character of a tax paid by those who had no voice in its imposition, at the same time being of uncertain amount and not regulated by law. There was also this distinction between the present tax and the vestry cess, that the vestry cess was a voluntary tax in aid, the fund which was in the first instance derivable from the first-fruits and tenths being insufficient for the sustentation of the fabrics; but the clergy were exempted from first-fruits and tenths at the time when the vestry cess was abolished, leaving elsewhere the charge necessary for keeping up the fabrics. He trusted he had shown the noble and learned Lord that the present tax, if he would not admit it to be of the same character as tithe, stood upon an entirely different footing from vestry cess. It was a relief to the parish to a certain extent to take off the charges upon first-fruits and tenths. If they relieved the proprietors of houses in great towns from this payment, they stripped the clergy of the only provision for their maintenance, just as much so as though the landed proprietors were to be relieved from the payment of tithe, and the payment of tithe was provided for out of the funds of the State. He could not see any sufficient reason for making the exemption. He agreed with his noble Friend (Lord St. Germans) that it was a practical grievance. The payment of these small sums from the occupiers of small houses should be deducted from the payment to the landlord. If any mode could be adopted by which this tax could be commuted, or any plan could be suggested wherein it could be levied together with other municipal rates, or if it could be made a tax upon the owners of property in towns, he believed it would be a great improvement. But as he (Lord Stanley) did not feel in 1836, he did not feel now in 1846, that Ministers' Money, whether paid in Ireland, London, or Edinburgh, was a charge which the owners of property in large towns had a right to expect to be relieved from, or that it was a burden to be thrown upon the general community, who were charged with the maintenance of the clergy at home precisely in the same manner as the property in the town was charged.

LORD MONTEAGLE did not understand that the abolition of this mode of payment was proposed without an equivalent. Indeed, of all classes of the Irish clergy, the parochial clergy in some of the older parts of the corporate towns were just the class least remunerated in proportion to their labours. But though the principle of this tax was the same with that of tithes, the operation was grievously different, for it fell upon poor persons, who could sometimes only pay it by the sale of their household furniture; it was an old tax, not adapted to modern times, and instead of being *ad valorem*, it was *contra valorem*, falling upon those parts of a town which were the poorest. It was, therefore, infinitely worse than tithes; and a remedy ought to be found. Many clergymen, it seemed, felt obliged to give up their due, under this system; but that was not a right position for them to be placed in.

Petition read and ordered to lie on the Table.

The House adjourned at a quarter to Six.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, February 20, 1846.

MINUTES.] NEW MEMBERS SWORN.—For Suffolk (Eastern Division), Edward Sherlock Gooch, Esq.; for Dorset, John Floyer, Esq.; for Dorset, Henry Ker Seymer, Esq.; for Westminster, Sir De Lacy Evans.

PETITIONS PRESENTED. By several hon. Members, from an immense number of places, against any Diminution of the Protection hitherto granted to Agriculture.—By Mr. Wakley, from Watchmakers of Clerkenwell and its Vicinity, for a Total and Immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By several hon. Members, from various places, against the proposed Measures respecting Customs and Corn Importation.—By several hon. Members, from a great number of places, for a Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By Mr. Bright, from Minister of the Congregational Independent Church, and Congregations of Protestant Dissenters, in the Parishes of Bicester and Launton, for Commercial Reform.—By Lord Rendlesham, from Frances Sarah Barlee, of Duke's Bridge House, Bungay, for Redress against certain Proceedings in the Court of Chancery, &c.—By Colonel Fox, from Inhabitants of Poplar, for Remission of Sentence upon William S. Ellis.—By Mr. Blackburne, from Inhabitants of Warrington and Upton-upon-Severn, against Enrolment of the Militia.—By Colonel Fox, from Inhabitants of Poplar, for Remis-

sion of Sentence upon Frost, Williams, and Jones.—By Mr. Aldam, from Inhabitants of the Borough of Leeds, for Peace with America, and against Enrolment of the Militia.

RAILWAY BILLS (IRELAND).

The O'CONOR DON rose to move—

"That it be an Instruction to the Select Committee on Petitions that in all cases of Irish Railway Bills, wherein the promoters shall have proved compliance with the Standing Orders in the House of Lords, they do give priority to the investigation of the compliance with the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, applicable to such Bills, over all other cases which may stand for enquiry before them, provided due notice of the sitting of the Committee for such purpose has been given, and that the promoters of such Bill propose to prove the compliance with the Standing Orders either wholly or in part by *viva voce* evidence."

He begged to observe that when he had given notice of his intention to submit that Motion to the House, he was not aware that the hon. Member for Dublin had given notice of a similar one. Their objects were the same. They were both desirous of affording facilities to the progress of Irish railways. It was known that all Irish railways were obliged to commence in the House of Lords, that the witnesses should necessarily wait until they had given their evidence again in the House of Commons. Now, the delay would be productive of very great expense and inconvenience if those witnesses should be compelled to stay in London until that case in which they were engaged should have come down in regular order. The object which his hon. Friend the Member for Dublin and he himself had in view, was, that those witnesses should have an opportunity of at once giving their evidence, that so they might be released from further attendance. In the case of English Bills, the parties could reckon very nearly upon the certainty of the day on which they might be expected to be in attendance; but in the case of Irish Bills they could not calculate upon their time. The hon. Gentleman stated the case of the county surveyor of Wexford, who was obliged, after giving his evidence before the Lords' Committee, to go over to attend the assizes in the county of Wexford, and then to return immediately to London, at very great inconvenience. He instanced another case, in which no fewer than one hundred and eighty-four other Railway Bills intervened between the one in which a friend of his was engaged, and the one under hearing; and yet all the witnesses were compelled to remain in London at an enormous expense until the case should have been disposed of. He (The O'Conor Don) believed there was every disposition on the part of hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the House to give every facility to Irish railway business in the present state of the country; and he believed that the Motion he had to propose would tend greatly to effect the object which all had in view.

Mr. GROGAN seconded the Motion; he said that he had put a notice of Motion on the book with a similar intention to that of his hon. Friend. His Motion was—

"That it be an instruction to the Committee on Petitions for Private Bills that a Sub-Committee for the consideration of petitions for Irish Railway Bills be appointed."

It was not the object of either his hon. Friend or himself to delay the business connected with England by that Motion. On the contrary, it was calculated to facilitate the business of all.

Mr. O'CONNELL did not know why the Motion should extend only to Railway Bills. He did not see why all Private Bills connected with Ireland should not be included. He should, therefore, beg leave to move, if the Motion were persisted in, as an Amendment, that instead of the words, "In all cases of Irish Railway Bills," the words "in all cases of Irish Private Bills," should be inserted.

Lord GRANVILLE SOMERSET, though exceedingly anxious to facilitate Irish railway business as much as possible, thought that the Motion could hardly be acceded to. Before it could be agreed to, he should like to hear the opinion of the Chairman of the Committee on Private Bills, as to whether the Committee had not already actually the power to advance any Bills they should think fit. He did not object to the principle of the Motion, but he believed that it would be found practically to be unnecessary.

Mr. STRUTT, as the Chairman of the Committee alluded to by the noble Lord, begged to say that he believed the Committee had the power to make a selection, and recommend the advancement of any particular Bill; but at the same time he should say that the Committee would feel the greatest reluctance and difficulty in giving priority to any one or any class, or taking any out of the ordinary course, without receiving some special notice from the House, or some positive intimation of its desire that such a course should be adopted. The Committee had, as the House was fully aware, a vast number of Bills before them. There was an accumulation of business altogether unprece-

dented, and the Committee would feel very great difficulty in giving to any party a priority, without some special intimation from the House. He did not mean to say that an actual Motion was necessary, but merely that they should be able to gather that in that particular class of cases there should be a priority of hearing afforded. With regard to the two modes proposed, it had struck him that neither was the very best plan that could be suggested. The hon. Member for Roscommon proposed that Irish Bills should have priority over English. Of that he did not approve, for the agents for the English Bills would have to keep their witnesses in town, which would be productive of great discontent. The hon. Member for Dublin, on the other hand, proposed a new Committee, which should be composed of Members who had no experience, and who would consequently not be likely to give satisfaction. There were at present six, or rather he should say, seven, Sub-Committees sitting daily; and he should be inclined to propose that one of them should give up their attention solely to Irish Bills, rather than have a new and inexperienced Committee appointed. But at all events he should wish to know if it were the feeling of the House that peculiar facility should be given to any class of Bills, before the Committee could take upon themselves the serious responsibility of giving a preference.

Sir W. HEATHCOTE, whilst joining in the sentiments expressed by his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, wished to mention one circumstance before hon. Members should have made up their minds upon the subject. In the case of Irish Bills having passed the House of Lords, and being obliged to keep witnesses in town until their turn in the House of Commons should have arrived, the question was one merely of expense, and not one of retarding the proceedings; but in the case of English Bills which should be set aside to make way for others, the question would be not one of expense alone, but of delay to their proceedings, as they should afterwards have to pass the House of Lords. To them, therefore, the question would be one of loss of time as well as loss of money.

Dr. BOWRING thought that every facility ought to be given to the Irish Bills. The inconvenience which their promoters felt in being delayed in London, must be much greater than it could be in the case of English Bills. He hoped that, whether one Committee were to be charged with the care of Irish business, or that any other mode should be adopted, that something would be positively done to facilitate their proceedings.

Sir J. GRAHAM observed, that the necessity for facilitating the despatch of railway business was by no means confined to Ireland, and that it might be necessary to extend the same facilities to Scotch Bills. He was informed that there was a district in the Highlands of Scotland where there was great distress at the present moment, arising partly from the failure of the potato crop, and partly from the want of employment. There was a petition before the House for a Bill to make a railway from Oban to Glasgow; and he was informed that there was no opposition offered to the Bill, either in point of form or on the merits. But, although there was no opposition to it, it was very far down in the list, and must wait its time, unless some arrangement were made to give it a preference. He thought it was a matter well worthy the attention of the House to consider whether, in the present pressure of business with reference to Private Bills, a Committee of Inquiry should not be appointed to report whether facilities ought not to be given to such Bills as the one he had referred to, where there was no opposition, and where the necessity for employment was unusually great.

Mr. LABOUCHERE said, it was already under the consideration of the Committee of which he was a Member, whether it would not be expedient that Scotch railways, as well as Irish railways, should originate during the present Session in the House of Lords—a measure which, if adopted, would obviously tend to relieve railway business in that House, and afford the same facility for the passing of Scotch Railway Bills as had already been afforded to Irish railways. With regard to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Roscommon, he considered that unless some such plan was adopted, Irish Railway Bills would absolutely be put to a disadvantage, in place of being facilitated. It was well known that the Standing Orders of the House of Lords were more strict than those of the House of Commons; and that some of the Bills might be going on in the House of Lords, incurring great expense there, without knowing whether or not they would pass the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. If this could be avoided with justice to other parties, it ought surely to be done.

As to the manner in which it could best be done, he could not well say; but, after the general opinion which had been evinced by all sides of the House, that, under present circumstances, every facility should be given to Irish Railway Bills, it would be only acting in accordance with that principle if that Committee of which the hon. Member for Derby was Chairman, were to take such measures as were consistent with justice to others to carry that Resolution into effect. Of the two suggestions made by the hon. Members who had first spoken, he thought that made by the hon. Member for Dublin the preferable one; but the suggestion of the hon. Member for Derby was probably the best of all, namely, that one of the Committees should undertake, under the present circumstances, all the railway business, both of Ireland and of Scotland, in case they should allow Scotch Bills to originate in the House of Lords, as in the case of Irish. He thought the House had much better not come to any formal Resolution on the subject, but allow the Committee to remain unfettered by any decision or instruction. They (the Committee) should find no difficulty in carrying the intimated wishes of the House into effect.

SIR G. CLERK thought it quite inexpedient that the House should come to any formal Resolution. The Committee had full power to make any arrangement they pleased with regard to any business that might come before them; and his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, although he might see some difficulty in the matter, must have gathered enough from the generally expressed feeling of the House in the present state of Ireland, to guide the decision of the Committee of which he was the Chairman. Enough had been said to show that it would meet the general concurrence of the House if the Committee were to facilitate the Irish measure.

SIR G. GREY also thought it best to leave the matter in the hands of the Committee, who had both the power and the disposition to make such arrangements as would best carry out the views of the House; but there was another subject to which he wished to call the attention of the House, and on which he had already communicated with the hon. Member for Derby, but in respect of which, however, it appeared that the Committee of which he was Chairman would not feel themselves at liberty to act without some expression of the opinion of the House. The House were aware that a Classification Committee had been appointed to group together all Bills belonging to the same district of country, and that after the second reading they were referred to a Select Committee. It might so happen, however, that of ten Bills sent before the Committee on Petitions, eight of them might have passed the Committee; but that the other two, in consequence of being far down on the list, might be delayed for two or three weeks. What he had to suggest was, that it should be left to the discretion of the Committee on Petitions to take such Bills out of their order, with a view to complete the examination of Bills in the same group.

MR. WILSON PATTEN said, that the Committee alluded to would have to report thirty-three groups to the House on Monday next.

MR. FOX MAULE begged to offer an intimation to the Committee of which the hon. Member for Derby was Chairman, with regard to the Oban and Glasgow Railway Bill, to which the right hon. Baronet opposite had referred. That Bill stood very low down on the list. It was desirable that it should be discussed as early as possible, in order that employment might be afforded to the people in that part of the country, who were much distressed; and if the Committee had power (which, however, he doubted), he trusted that that case would meet with their attention, in order to have it advanced.

MR. AGLIONBY was of opinion, that Bills in the same group ought as much as possible to be taken together, and not exactly as they stood in the list. He was rather in favour of giving some discretion to the Committee; but he did not see how it could be done without an express instruction from the House. Perhaps the better course would be, that the Secretary of State for the Home Department should propose that a particular Bill, on account of distress in the district, should be taken out of its turn, and that the House, acting on its own knowledge, or on the responsibility of the Minister of the Crown, should instruct the Committee accordingly.

The O'CONOR DON believed that the suggestion of the hon. Member for Derby (Mr. Strutt), would accomplish the end he had in view.

MR. P. SCROPE said, there was a growing notion out of doors that the legislation upon railways was worthy only of the island of Laputa. He recommended that a Committee should sit in Dublin, to consider the best lines for Ireland.

MR. STRUTT was anxious that there should be no misunderstanding on the subject as to what Bills ought, whether Irish or Scotch, to have precedence in the Committee.

MR. HUDSON said, that the only way to meet the difficulty was to appoint one or two other Committees, which would be prepared to take the Irish and Scotch Bills. He threw it out for the consideration of hon. Members, whether it might not be expedient to assimilate the Orders of the two Houses of Parliament, so that when an inquiry into a Railway Bill had been completed in one House, it would not be necessary to go through precisely the same process in the other House.

Motion withdrawn.

CROWN SOLICITORS (IRELAND).

MR. PIGOTT put the following questions, of which he had given notice to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Home Department, whether appointments had been made of three persons as Crown Solicitors for the Home Circuit in Ireland, or for certain counties belonging to it, in the room of the Crown Solicitor for that circuit who had died? If that question were answered in the affirmative, then to ask, whether the salaries or emoluments of those officers had been fixed, and if so, at what amount; when were the appointments made; when was it determined to divide the circuit into districts, with separate solicitors, at distinct salaries; and whether there were any objection, on the part of the Government, to laying before the House copies of all documents relating to any alterations which had been made in the office of Crown Solicitor, or in the arrangements for the conduct of Crown prosecutions in Ireland?

SIR J. GRAHAM had to state, in answer, that the Government had determined to divide the appointment consequent on the death of the Crown Solicitor for the Home Circuit in Ireland. That decision had been come to towards the end of the month of December; but the appointments were not dated until about three weeks ago, and they were to take effect from the 31st of March. He ought first to state that the Home Circuit in Ireland consisted of six counties, and that to each of the three new Crown Solicitors two counties would be allotted, excepting the Crown Solicitor for Dublin should happen to resign or die. As to salaries, the salaries of each would be 500*l.* a year, and 200*l.* a year more to cover all expenses: in the agregate, the salaries and allowances would amount to 2,100 a year, being 100*l.* a year less than the emoluments of the late Crown Solicitor. This change was merely an experiment; and it was stated to be so to the parties, and that the arrangement was terminable at any time. In reply to the latter part of the question, he would say, that there would be no objection to produce the official correspondence on the subject; but it would not be expedient to lay upon the Table the opinions of the Attorney and the Solicitor General.

COLONIAL POSTAGE.

MR. ROEBUCK said, that he wished to put a question to the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury; and in order to explain the question, it would be necessary that he should trouble the House with half a dozen words. The House was aware that the authority of the Post Office of England extended to the Colonies, but that by Act of Parliament the power of the Post Office authorities was defined and restricted within certain limits. Many of the inhabitants of Canada were desirous that the system of penny postage which had been established in England should be extended to Canada; and the question which he had to put was, whether there was any possibility of an arrangement by which the benefit of the penny postage could be extended to that Colony?

SIR R. PEEL said, that the question put by the hon. and learned Gentleman would better form the subject of an official communication than of a question in that House. The considerations which affected the postal arrangements with the Colonies were of a very complicated character. Thus, for instance, with regard to Canada: first, there was to be considered the communication between the mother country and Canada; then came the internal communication within the Colony itself; and lastly, the postal communications with other portions of our North American Colonies. Now, though there was some objection upon the part of Canada, it certainly, as a general rule, seemed advantageous—even to the Colony itself—that all these arrangements should be upon one footing, and placed under one superintendence. The hon. and learned Gentleman would, therefore, see the difficulties which beset the arrangements which, on behalf of the people of Canada, he had suggested. It was quite

impossible that the Government could at once undertake to give a precise answer to the question; and the most advisable course for the inhabitants of Canada would be to communicate their wishes through the Governor General of Canada; and their communications should receive the most considerate attention on the part of the Government at home.

THE POTATO DISEASE.

MR. HORSMAN begged to call the attention of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government to a statement which appeared in the public prints relative to the disease in the potato. From that statement it seemed to be the opinion of Dr. Lindley, that the disease would not be confined to this year's crop, but would affect the potatoes of next year through the seed employed for their production. The statement to which he referred was as follows:—

"Potato Disease.—At the ordinary meeting of the Horticultural Society, held on Tuesday, Dr. Lindley exhibited some specimens of new potatoes grown at the gardens of the Society and Lady Rolle at Bicton. In many the disease of last autumn was very apparent, and in some cases it was very extensive. They had been produced from sets of potatoes which had been but slightly affected, but showed that wherever the vitality had been influenced, the disease would be perpetuated—a fact which could not too generally be made known amongst growers. In many, the brown and blighted haulm and the decayed tubers were quite a sperceptible as in any of the old specimens. In the specimens fresh dug up no appearance of fungus could be detected by the most minute microscopical examination; but this was very apparent in those from the country, showing that it was a consequence and not the cause of the disease."

Such was the statement which had appeared in the newspapers; and the question which he had to put was, whether the right hon. Baronet had received any communication from Dr. Lindley in corroboration of the facts narrated in the paragraph he had just read to the House?

SIR R. PEEL: I stated, upon Monday night, that I was not without apprehensions that the dangers likely to result from the failure of the potato crop would not be limited to the present season. But upon Monday night I spoke without having had any direct personal communication with Dr. Lindley. I had received communications of a general nature, inducing me to fear that such would be the case. On the following day, however, on the Tuesday, I received a direct communication from Dr. Lindley. He stated to me that he had felt it to be his duty to forward an immediate statement to the Government, acquainting them with the fact, of which he no longer entertained any doubt, that the plant produced from diseased seed was and would be diseased itself, and that where at first fungi could not be seen by the most minute microscopical examination, operations had taken place to test the soundness of the plant, and that, in the progress of the test, the disease became quite apparent. Professor Lindley had therefore impressed upon the Government the necessity of precaution with regard to the use of diseased potatoes as seed; and I do trust that every caution will be used throughout the country to prevent the disease making any progress in our next year's crop.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE (EIGHTH NIGHT).

The Order of the Day having been read for going into Committee upon the Customs and Corn Importation Act,

MR. CUMMING BRUCE said the right hon. Gentleman the Paymaster General of the Forces, in his address to the House last night appealed to his (Mr. C. Bruce's) hon. Friend the Member for the county of Devon, and to other hon. Gentlemen who were opposed to Her Majesty's Government on this question, not to protract the present discussion; pointing out to them the great danger of keeping the country in a continual state of agitation upon so important a subject as that of a repeal of the Corn Laws. The right hon. Gentleman also intimated that if the measure of Government were at once acquiesced in, an end would at once be put to all agitation upon the subject. Now, certainly if the entire sacrifice of the interests and the opinions of one important class of the community to the demands of another class, could be designated a settlement of the question, then indeed he was willing to assent to the suggestion of the right hon. Gentleman; for if he thought that by acceding to the Motion he should succeed in putting an end to the agitation that was now prevailing, he confessed that many of his objections to the measure would be obviated. But he could not so persuade himself. He could not but apprehend that if this measure should be carried through Parliament, an agitation of a much more difficult description would ensue. He could not, therefore, look to the promised cessation of agitation as a reason to induce him to acquiesce in the measure now proposed. We could never expect to

be long without seasons of great distress, whereby the masses of the people would be affected; and he feared, if this cause of agitation were removed, there would not be wanting those who would soon find other subjects for agitation, and other alleged causes for distress. There were other of our most valued institutions which might, in such a case, be exposed to the same danger from agitation. The existence of tithe, the existence of the Established Church, the existence of a powerful and honourable aristocracy, the existence of great masses of property in the hands of a few, the law of primogeniture, the becoming splendour of the Court, the necessary expenses of the monarchy, might all be made use of by designing persons as objects against which to direct an agitation as violent as that with which they had now to contend. But they would not have much to fear from such agitation if they had a strong and steady Government; because popular agitation always derived its principal force, as it had done in this instance, from the Government declaring in favour of the measure sought. He therefore could not attach such importance to the promised cessation of the Anti-Corn-Law agitation as to induce him to agree to the withdrawal of this protection. Frequent allusion had been made to experience in the course of this debate. Now, he should like to ask, what had been the experience of his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government, in past Sessions, as to putting an end to popular agitation? He would not refer to any particular measure; but surely the experience of the right hon. Baronet and of every Gentleman in that House, must prove to him that, enjoying free institutions as we did, and the country teeming with an active and energetic population, occasions of popular agitation would arise; and to concede things to that agitation when the reason and judgment were not convinced of the policy of the concession, was a sure means to create still further agitation. And it would generally be found that the advantage to be derived from any measure for which agitation was got up, was in an inverse ratio to the violence and strength of the agitation by which it was sought to be attained. He would not now detain the House by going into the question of the Corn Laws, or by following hon. Gentlemen who had taken part in the discussion; because, if the debate went on at its present pace, the probability was, they would arrive at the real question of the Corn Laws somewhere about Easter; and he should then be prepared to state his opinions on that question. He did not blame those hon. Gentlemen who had gone into a discussion of the Corn Laws; nothing was more natural than that they should do so. He meant not to assert that Gentlemen, who were swallowed up in the study of political economy, were very liable to have their cogitations disturbed by the events that were passing around them; those who were so absorbingly occupied in advancing the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number, and in taking an enlarged view of the destinies of nations, might be excused for overlooking the happiness of some few millions of their own fellow countrymen; and they might be pardoned for neglecting the happiness of the existing population, because their hearts were disposed to beat with a more extended philanthropism. But it was not so with Gentlemen on his (the Ministerial) side of the House. They were engaged in serious consideration of the interests of their constituencies and of their countrymen; and these feelings had found eloquent and impassioned advocacy in the speech of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien), on whose description of the imaginary conversation with some "good fellow" of a farmer, the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had the other night committed the great unfairness of attributing the sentiments then expressed by the hon. Gentleman as if they had been his own, whereas they had been uttered in the character of a political economist; and had his hon. Friend spoken as in his own character, he would have used language quite as sensible and kind as that which the right hon. Baronet had imagined that he would have spoken in such a conversation. The noble Lord the Member for the city of London, had announced the other night a great truth. He had ventured to prophecy that the measure of the Government, if carried at all, would be carried not by the votes of those who had usually supported the Ministers, but by those of the noble Lord and others who voted with him. He was not prepared to offer a contradiction to that prophecy; and he must say that the speech of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department was not likely to impair the certainty of its fulfilment. After that speech, very few Members on his (the Ministerial) side of the House, would be

disposed to follow the example of the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool, who, after proving, by a course of irresistible argument, the danger and inexpediency of the measure of Government, had turned round and declared his intention of giving his vote in direct opposition to his judgment. The noble Lord had alleged as the reason, or rather consideration, which induced him to take that course, that the position of those who were desirous of maintaining the protection of native industry was so greatly weakened by the declared change of opinion in the Government, as to be now very difficult to maintain; that the noble Lord the Member for London having failed in his attempt to form a Government, and it appearing to him (Lord Sandon) extremely difficult—he believed impossible—to form a Government on the principles of protection; and seeing that the country must be governed, and not seeing that there was any other practical Government than the one now existing, the noble Lord had deemed that he should best consult his duty to his country by not giving his vote in such a way as might weaken or tend to displace that Government, thinking that thereby great danger and inconvenience might arise to the country. The hon. Member for Inverness-shire, on the other hand, had expressed his apprehension of the impossibility of opposing what the hon. Member conceived to have now become the Anti-Corn-Law opinions of the masses of the people. With neither of these hon. hon. Members was he disposed to agree. He was not at all prepared to think so poorly of his country as to imagine that it contained only some ten or twenty Gentlemen capable of conducting its affairs. That would be reducing it to the state of the Scottish Sovereign at the battle of Chevy Chase, when, upon the death of Douglas, he at once gave up the fight; whereas the jolly English King, when he heard Earl Percy was slain, said, that though he regretted the Earl's death, "he had five hundred men as good as he." Now it might be said, perhaps, that the people of England had not exactly so many as five hundred men capable of carrying on their Government. There were certainly some five or six as well capable of so doing as those who were at present in office. Then, as to the opinion of the majority of the people having turned towards free trade, it should be remembered that all the machinery of agitation had been long at work on their minds, and, by means of gratuitous publications and hired lecturers, they had been deluded and deceived; while the agricultural party, relying on their leaders, had been tame and quiescent, but had now discovered their fatal mistake, and perhaps before the projected measure had passed long — supposing it should pass — there would be an agitation against it as strong as that now excited in its favour. It might be that some honourable men should be sincerely influenced by the apparent hopelessness of the protection cause and the imagined opposition of the people; but there ought to exist an equal sense of the importance of the morality and principle of public men. For his own part, though he had not been pledged to protection, knowing that he had been elected on the understanding that his opinions were in favour of protection, he could not but feel the implied promise arising from that tacit understanding as all the more binding, on account of the absence of pledges; and he could not face his constituents after turning round upon opinions on which he thus had been elected. It was, in fact, extremely difficult to explain such sudden changes of opinion to common capacities and ordinary ideas of honesty; and he had always endeavoured to avoid occasion for such unpleasant explanations. He had succeeded in avoiding them hitherto, and he was not now about to expose himself to the awkward dilemma to which he alluded. The hon. Member for Bridport had spoken of the opinion of the farming tenantry of Scotland as favourable to the Ministerial measure, and had attributed this to leases. Now, he (Mr. Bruce) should certainly have imagined that the existence of leases made all the difference the other way; for surely a man who had, on the faith of a lease by which he was bound, invested capital, would regard a change in the law affecting the price of grain with more apprehension than one who was not bound to the farm in such a manner, and had not invested capital. It should be remembered that a large part of the lands of Scotland was under family provisions, in the hands of trustees, who could not alter the arrangements to meet altered circumstances, so that it might be imagined, as the fact was, that the farmers in Scotland were the reverse of favourable to the Ministerial scheme. Indeed he had recently received a letter from Scotland stating that the farmers had heard of the measure with great gloom and depression, and deprecated any material interference with the Corn Laws, as certain

to be detrimental to the best interests of the country. The statement of the hon. Member, therefore, was exceedingly incorrect. One reason alone would render the recent speech of the right hon. the Secretary for the Home Department a great argument against adopting the Government measures — that reason being, that the right hon. Baronet had positively adopted to the full extent the letter of the noble Lord the Member for the city of London. He would not, like the hon. Member for Montrose, designate that letter as an advertisement for office; but certainly the gravity of its assumptions was only equalled by their monstrous extravagance, and the enormously erroneous inferences with which they were associated. "The blight of agriculture," "the bane of commerce," "the cause of misery, disease, and death;" such were the phrases applied to the Corn Laws in the letter adopted by the right hon. Baronet (Sir James Graham). Why, if the Corn Laws were all this, how was it that the noble Lord had not discovered it when in office, and at a time when wheat was at 70*s*.? Whereas more recently it had been no higher than 58*s*. And how was such a representation to be reconciled with the fact that in the last three or four years, under a policy preserving the Corn Laws, the commercial and manufacturing prosperity of the country had greatly increased? As to calling the Corn Laws "the cause of famine, disease, and death," such language was arrant nonsense, and nothing else. The simple fact was, that though the population of Great Britain had increased by ten millions during the last fifteen years, the price of corn had been little above the continental level, and importations had not been at all extensive. In 1833, 1834, and 1835, the price of wheat had averaged between 34*s*. or 40*s*. Surely, if we could raise the corn for ourselves, we had better do so than take it from foreigners! Without protection, so great an extent of production could never have been attained. And if agriculture were but allowed to go on undisturbed by alarm about the removal of protection, the Corn Laws—though always necessary to provide against contingencies — would soon become a dead letter, and practically inoperative, through the extent of our agricultural productiveness. Reduced prices, consequent on a plentiful harvest at home, were different from reduced prices produced by importations from abroad. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Home Department had omitted to attempt to reconcile his present doctrines with his speech of 1839, from an admiring perusal of which he (Mr. Bruce) had just come, and which he well remembered he had cheered till he was hoarse, and certainly it had left upon his mind an impression not effaced by the right hon. Baronet's last speech on the subject. But there were other Gentlemen in the Cabinet whom the House would be anxious to hear—such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in whose province this question certainly was. A very important question, too, remained to be elucidated—whether those Members of the Cabinet who had originally dissented from the opinions of the Premier, had objected to the proposition of a suspension of the Corn Laws, *per se*, or as coupled with a proposition for repeal. Perhaps some of the Cabinet had followed the example of the noble Duke (Wellington) in yielding rather to their feelings than to their opinions, and had been influenced in their ultimate agreement with their Colleague, more by the desire to avoid embarrassment to Her Majesty's Administration, than by any conviction of their own. It was to be deeply lamented that the noble Duke, in whom loyalty and readiness to sacrifice personal predilections were such illustrious traits of character, should on this occasion have surrendered what seemed to have been his better judgment, and been content to follow where he best might have led. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, in his speech the other night, had proved that manufacturing duties might, in many cases, be advantageously reduced, but had failed to show that the same principles would equally apply to corn, and had not attempted to establish the connexion—which in argument the right hon. Baronet had assumed — between a suspension and a repeal of the Corn Laws. The right hon. Baronet had not endeavoured to show that all practical purposes could not have been effected by some modification of the law, and had utterly failed to educe any reason for the proposition of a measure which reduced all his supporters to a position of such unexpected and such undeserved difficulty, and which inflicted such a deep wound on public confidence, on public men. The right hon. Baronet should recollect that he had not more honoured his party by his ability, than they had honoured him by their fidelity. He did not pretend to be a party man; he was willing to give all due weight to the

obligations of conscience; but he considered when a leader was bound to a party, he lay under a certain obligation to those who had been accustomed to guide their actions by his, and to mature their judgments from a careful study of his opinions. Holding this belief, he was bound to say, he could not recognise the power of the right hon. Baronet (Sir Robert Peel) to demand the sacrifice of opinions conscientiously adopted. The Minister who changed his opinions might be called upon to resign—and the right hon. Baronet had resigned under such circumstances—but he could not bring against the right hon. Baronet the shadow of a shade of want of perfect integrity of purpose when he changed his opinions with respect to the repeal of the Corn Laws. This being his conviction, he would abstain from using any expression at variance with it. But looking to the measures proposed by the right hon. Baronet, he could see no justification for the crisis into which he had precipitated the Government, or for any alteration in the protective policy of the country. What were the circumstances under which the right hon. Baronet had changed his opinions? Had it pleased the great Disposer of events to visit Ireland with a calamity endangering the lives of four or five millions of the people? There were, he believed, statements made somewhat to that effect, and he considered to an extent exaggerated; but those representations, coming as they did from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, it obviously became the duty of the Government to receive them at their full value. If the corn harvest in Ireland had likewise been deficient, the circumstance might have justified the suspension of the Corn Laws; and he, for one, in common with many of the Gentlemen whom he saw around him, would have been most willing to concur in any measure which might have been brought forward by Her Majesty's advisers to suspend those laws. But he confessed he could see no connexion between the potato famine and the repeal of the Corn Laws. If the ports had been thrown open, potatoes would not have been brought in—nothing but a supply of corn would have resulted from such a proceeding. If corn had been deficient in Ireland, the natural operation of the Corn Laws would have brought it in cheap, because, when the price of home-grown corn reached a certain amount, the trade in the foreign article became a free trade. The true remedy for the distresses of Ireland would be to find employment for the people, and thus afford them the means of either purchasing the food already in the country, or buying that which might be sent to it. What he complained of was, that the right hon. Baronet had not given his own law a fair trial. A factious and interested party, seeking for a reduction of wages by the instrumentality of "cheap bread," had taken advantage of a failure in the potato crop, to renew an agitation which had almost vanished, and the right hon. Baronet had yielded, and proposed to reverse, at the bidding of the League, the verdict of the Empire, which had been pronounced at the only legitimate tribunal, the hustings, on the occasion of the last general election. Was this the way the Reform Bill was to work? or was it to be supposed that a parcel of discontented individuals had only to assemble together, hire theatres; deliver lectures, hold a Parliament of their own, raise money by unconstitutional means (he would not say unlawful, though he would hope that shortly such measures might be made unlawful), in order to make the First Minister of the Crown yield to their importunities, and obey their dictates. It could not be denied for a moment, that the question at the last election was "Protection or no Protection." The majority of the national constituency had called upon the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues to take the helm of affairs, and to make it traverse freely for the benefit of all; and they did so, relying upon the belief that he would steer the ship to the port to which he himself had taught them to look as a port of refuge. Had that been the case? The right hon. Baronet had never said he would get into the trade winds, and run before the wind to the very shoal his supporters had wished him to guard them against. What was his argument against the Corn Laws? Why, that the country had prospered for centuries under them, and that consequently they ought to be abolished. And what had been his argument against protection? Why, because the consumption and price of all articles from which he had removed protecting duties protection had increased. If such was the case, why would not the rule hold good in the case of corn itself? With respect to the success of the right hon. Baronet's late measures, whereby he had proved that prices had risen, he did not think his conclusions had been formed upon satisfactory grounds. Had no other circumstances conspired to make this prosperity? The imposition of the Income

Tax, freely granted by an agricultural Parliament, restored the revenue to a prosperous condition, and had a tendency to give an impetus to speculation and trade. The mania for railways also caused a great demand for labour, and improved the prices of all commodities. To those causes he in a great degree attributed the flattering appearances of the Customs returns. But admitting that prices had risen and the consumption had increased, what guarantee was there that such a state of things would endure? And he would ask, was the probability of endurance such as to justify a total change in that protective policy under which this country had risen to be a Queen among the nations? He feared not; and he would not sacrifice his opinion, nor consent to embark with the right hon. Baronet on the boundless ocean of Free Trade, which no British trader had ever yet explored, and from which no British pilot had ever yet returned. He should hesitate to do so even if the breath of public approval promised to waft him to smooth waters, or woo with happy omen his extended canvass. They were told in glowing terms that their vessels would return laden with the rich produce of other climes; but those who supported Free Trade principles had failed to show that they might not return laden with impure exhalations under which the English Constitution could not exist. Instead of a smooth sea, he saw the breakers of self-interest, of severed political ties, of confidence impaired, and political respect shaken, and therefore it was he felt compelled to forbid the firing of that gun which booming over those turbid waters give the signal for sailing. His vote upon the present occasion would be given against Her Majesty's Ministers.

Mr. POULETT SCROPE said: Sir, the hon. Member for Berkshire, the other night, with a candour and honesty which did him honour, put this question on its right issue when he said:—"Either protection is right, or it is wrong; if right, maintain it—if wrong, abolish it without delay and without compensation." This, Sir, seems to me the only true view of the question, and it disposes at once of almost all the endless speeches we have heard from the other side upon the conduct of the two right hon. Baronets opposite, and the contrast between their present and their past sayings and doings. Upon this point I have nothing to remark but this, that whatever I may think of the resistance heretofore offered by those right hon. Baronets to the freedom of trade when proposed on this side the House, I admire and respect the noble courage with which they now avow and act upon their present convictions of its immense importance to the national interests. Nor shall I say anything on the question of the potato rot, or the impending famine in Ireland. This, too, is a matter only relating to the justification of the Government for repealing the Corn Law a little sooner rather than a little later, and has no bearing on the real question whether those laws are in themselves wrong or right. Neither, Sir, shall I attempt any addition to the body of facts already brought forward to prove that every relaxation of the restriction on commerce has hitherto been productive of benefit, not only to consumers generally, but to the producers themselves of the very articles which were before protected by high duties. But I must, in passing, protest against the undue weight that I think has been attached by the right hon. Baronet, and especially in his introductory speech, to the experience of the last three years as decisive of the question at issue. I protest against its being supposed that our decision is to be determined by that limited experience. Because, if so, it is very possible that the experience of the next three years may be brought forward to reverse that decision, in case any combination of unfavourable circumstances, produced by the chapters of accidents, such as a series of bad harvests, war, or panic, should give rise to a cycle of unprosperous years. I very much agree, too, with hon. Members who have attributed the prosperity of those years to other causes than the Tariff. No, Sir, the real arguments for free trade were as strong in 1841 as they are now. They were as strong ten, twenty, nay, thirty years ago, when the Corn Law of 1815 was first imposed. Nay, I will venture to say, that no arguments have been or will be produced in its favour, in the course of this debate, more cogent or more complete than those contained in the celebrated petition of the merchants of London, presented by the present Lord Ashburton, in 1820—or than those which were vainly urged upon the House, exactly twenty years ago, by a lamented relative of my own. Therefore, Sir, I intend to confine my remarks to the narrow issue stated by the hon. Member for Berkshire, viz.—is protection right, or is it wrong? And I do earnestly request the attention of hon. Members opposite—of them especially—to a very brief form of

the argument, which alone is quite conclusive to my mind, and which I defy them to refute. Either the Corn Laws do raise the price of corn, or they do not. This every one will concede. If they do not, then they cannot benefit the agriculturists, or any one; and they are a gratuitous interference with the freedom of trade—preventing the free exchange of our surplus manufactured produce, of which we so easily can produce more than we want, for the food of which we have too little by universal acknowledgment. But it is triumphantly said by some, if the repeal of the Corn Laws does not lower the price of bread, the manufacturers cannot profit by it. What! Is there no benefit in an increased supply, even though it may not cheapen the article? Is our entire population so well fed, so well supplied with the best wheaten bread, that it is not to be wished they should get more? Suppose the repeal of the Corn Laws had the effect of setting to work a portion of our population who are now too poor to get bread at all, or get very little (the millions who rejoice on potatoes), to work for the foreigner, to produce clothing for him, he feeding them with corn. Might not this take place without any fall in prices; and if it did, would it not be a great benefit and blessing to them, which your law now prevents and prohibits? Then, under this supposition, the Corn Law is an unmitigated evil and injustice. Well, now, take the other alternative—and one or other cannot but be true. Suppose the Corn Laws do raise the price of corn. How will you justify this? *Primâ facie* it is a grievous wrong. Cheapness and abundance of the first necessary of life ought to be the first object of legislation to create, not to prevent, if legislation can do either. "Why," say the protectionists, "we are a highly taxed people, we have a debt of 800,000,000*l.*; we cannot compete with untaxed Poles and Russians; we must have high prices to enable us to pay our high taxes." This would be all very well, if by your protective system you could make the Poles and Russians pay your high taxes for you. But is it so? You must have high prices to pay your high taxes with. Then those who pay your high prices are intentionally made to pay your high taxes. Who are these? The Poles and the Russians? Oh no! The British consumers. All you can do by your system of protection, if it succeeds, is to make some other classes of this country, other subjects of Her Majesty, pay your share of taxation. But is this just?—is this right? or is it not wrong? "Oh, but," you say again, "we will not protect agriculture alone, but all classes of producers. All shall have high prices to enable them to pay their high taxes." Say you so? But how will you manage this? Can you raise the price of the great staple manufactures of the country by any system of protective duties? No! for they are already at the European or natural level. Well, then, with respect to this large proportion of the productive classes, comprehending a third, perhaps, of the whole, you can't raise the prices of their goods; and you therefore not only do not indemnify them for the high taxation, but you actually impose on them the burden of your own share of taxation in a higher price for their bread. Is this right, or is it wrong? But, moreover, there is another large class of persons—the monied interest, fundholders, annuitants, &c., who are not engaged in production at all, and whom, therefore, your protective system cannot benefit by any rise of prices, but whom, on the contrary, you compel to pay your share of the taxes in an enhanced price of the food they consume, without compensation either for their proper share of the taxes, or for the added amount you inflict upon them. Is this right? Sir, I am ashamed to hear this argument of our national debt repeated by men who should know better, like the hon. Member for Berkshire, the hon. Member for Sunderland, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, and the hon. Member for Devon. What! when, during the war, the gentlemen of England offered their fortunes to their country to defend it from invasion and a foreign foe, did they mean to indemnify themselves by a slice out of every poor man's loaf?—to pay the debt they then incurred by a bread tax? Was this in their bond? Is this right, or is it wrong? Look at the matter in detail. The manufacturing and commercial population pay high taxes on the beer they consume, in the malt tax; on their tea, their coffee, their sugar, their tobacco, and so on, towards the payment of the national debt. Can it make these burdens more easy in any way to them to make them pay you a heavy tax on their bread into the bargain. Really I ask hon. Members no longer to disgrace themselves by such arguments as these. It reminds me of a story told by Dr. M'Culloch (not the political economist, but the geologist and

traveller), of his meeting in the Western Highlands a farmer who lived some miles inland, and was building a house. He had to fetch deals for the purpose from the seacoast, and having but one pony and no cart, there being no road but a mountain track, Dr. M'Culloch met him driving his pony along with a heavy deal slung on one side, and an equally heavy stone slung on the other, the only purpose of the stone being to balance the deal. But even the stupid Highland farmer, though he forgot that the addition of the stone doubled the burden of his poor animal, did not imagine that he thereby lightened the weight of the deal on the other side. Why, the protectionists really argue as if by adding a bread-tax to the other taxes borne by this country, they can lighten their weight to all classes. Sir, the plea of the weight of national taxation for a Corn Law appears to me not only a false, but a dishonest one. By no possible contrivance or juggle of protection can you fix the debt on the foreigner; it must still be paid by British subjects of some kind; and if you relieve yourselves from your share of it by any trickery of this kind, you can only do it by shifting the burden upon the rest of the community. Yon have chosen to place it on the most helpless of all the masses—the eaters of bread—who, by your law, must buy at your shop, at your artificial prices, and so pay the debt for you or starve. Is this right, or is it wrong? No, Sir, I repeat, if the Corn Laws do not raise the price of corn, they at least diminish its supply to a half-fed people. If they do, they can only benefit one class at the expense of every other. Sir, I have listened most attentively to this debate, in which the Corn Laws are put upon, I hope, their last trial, to discover whether their advocates in this, their extreme urgency, could produce any one argument, anything worthy of the name of a reason, in their favour. Certainly I have listened in vain. I take the speech of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, who may be considered to represent the pure protectionists, from whom, therefore, if from any one, as the ablest speaker of that class, we might expect to hear the best defence that can be urged of the principle of the law. Now what was the real argument contained in that speech, under cover, I own, of very able and feeling oratory? I appeal to the recollection of the House if the main point of that speech was not an attack on what the hon. Member called a stern dogma of a cold and hard political economy, viz., that "we should buy as cheap and sell as dear as we can"—a maxim which I would venture to call, not a dogma of political economy, but the very first principle of all commerce, the A B C of trade. But perhaps the hon. Member despises trade and its shopkeeping maxims. Perhaps he thinks a trading community should act on the opposite principle of selling cheap and buying dear. But I am much mistaken if his friends and clients, the tenant-farmers, act on any other than this vulgar and cruel mercantile principle themselves. I have always understood that they were tolerably hard bargainers, at fair and market, for a profit, if any could be made, on their sales and purchases. They would not like to be compelled to act on the opposite principle of buying dear and selling cheap. No; what they really mean, and the hon. Member, too, in railing against the principle of buying cheap and selling dear, is, that the manufacturers should sell cheap to them, the farmers, while they sell dear to the manufacturers; and *vice versâ*, that the manufacturers should buy dear of the farmers, and the farmers buy cheap of the manufacturers; and this is in fact the object aimed at by the Corn Laws. But the hon. Member illustrated the cruelty of this flagitious dogma of a cold political economy by pathetic pictures, which were not without their effect on the feelings of the House. The first was that of a crowd of paper-stainers and silk weavers, thrown out of employment by the unpatriotic and anti-national preference of French silks and paper-hangings to those of British manufacture. Every picture has its reverse: and to the hon. Member's picture of an ideal scene resulting from the operation of our mercantile principle, I will oppose a picture of the result of his protective principle, not drawn from the imagination, but one of the real scenes which did occur, in hundreds of instances, but a few years ago, in Paisley, in Stockport, in Manchester, and other places. Let the hon. Member imagine a manufacturer at that time, his warehouses choked with goods which he could not dispose of, his foreign correspondents writing to him that the foreign market was equally glutted; imagine that, after putting his workpeople first on low wages, next on half work, he finally finds himself obliged to discharge them altogether, and to shut up his mill. They crowd in hundreds round him—a melancholy spectacle—men, women, and children, imploring him for work and food. What is

his answer? "My friends, my heart bleeds for you. I employed you so long as I possessed the means of doing so; but those means can only be furnished by the sale of the produce of your labour. All my capital lies locked up in yonder warehouses, and I have exhausted my credit likewise. The foreigner can buy no more of the goods you make, because our laws prohibit his paying for them in the only thing he has to sell—his corn, the very food you want; nay, at this moment, while you are starving, there lie hundreds of thousands of quarters of corn in the Queen's warehouses a few miles off, consignments from foreign merchants, who would be glad to take any goods in exchange for it if the law did not interfere. This law, enacted by landowners for their own supposed interest, prevents your feeding on corn that you do not buy of them. Therefore you must starve, and I must be ruined by this unjust landlords' law." I ask the hon. Member what does he think would be, nay, what are the feelings of crowds of starving men, to whom this language—that of truth, be it observed—is necessarily addressed? The hon. Member does not seem to be aware of the fact that to buy anything from the foreigner we must sell to him something of equal value—that for every quarter of foreign corn, or every piece of foreign silk imported, we must expect to pay for it an equal value of goods the produce of our own manufactures,—and that British or native industry is just as much employed in the one case as in the other; the only difference being (and a great difference it is) that by the free exchange we get more of what we want, or of a better quality, in return for our native industry, than if we attempted to produce it at home. And this is just the benefit which commerce confers. The hon. Member does not seem to be aware that the principle he declaims against as a cold dogma of a stern political economy is the one sole vivifying principle of all commerce—the stimulus to all improvement—the mainspring of civilization—the principle, namely, of obtaining the largest and the best result at the least cost—in other words, to get the most you can of what you want for your money or your labour. But I can hardly wonder at the opinions held by the hon. Member, when I see him sitting on the same bench with the hon. Member for Knaresborough, who abhors machinery as the root of all evil. It is a fitting alliance—in fact, it is the same fallacy in a different form. In fact, the notion that it is better to buy dear than to buy cheap is the same as that it is better to spend much labour than little, to produce the same result. The idea is, that the more of labour and capital anything costs to obtain it the better. So stated, it seems incredible that any men should entertain the idea. And yet this is the notion which lies at the bottom of all the declamations against machinery, for economising labour—and against the mercantile principle, for economising capital. In both cases an increase of produce is obtained at a less cost, the very circumstance which alone raised the condition of the civilized man above that of the savage. But are hon. Members consistent? The hon. Member who spoke the other night so pathetically of the wrong done to British industry by the use of French silks and German carriages, does he himself practically act upon his own principles? Not in the least. I make no doubt that he himself that very morning breakfasted on Chinese tea, sweetened with Indian sugar, probably in a French tea-cup, and stirred it with a spoon of silver from Peru. I dare say he drinks at dinner a moderate glass of wine from Spain, or Portugal, or France, perhaps all three. Nay, if we were to strip the hon. Member at this moment of all he has about him that is not exclusively the produce of British industry—if we took from him all that is made of German wool, of Russian flax, of Italian silk, and American cotton, I believe he would appear in a condition very unfitted for an assembly like this, and much more fitted for that state of society to which his principles, if acted on, would reduce us—

"When wild in woods the naked savage ran."

And as for the hon. Member for Knaresborough, if he were really consistent and faithful to his abhorrence of machinery and its results, he ought to come down here dressed in skins, he should live by the chase alone, knocking down his prey with a club, or rather his fists (for I doubt if a club be not an instrument for shortening labour), he should tear it with his teeth alone, and grub up the earth for roots with his finger nails. Will hon. Gentlemen but reflect seriously on the extremities to which their principles would lead them, if carried out fully and universally, as they ought to be by their own admission? Take our foreign commerce—suppose our exports to amount to a round fifty millions on the average of years—these must be paid for in imports of at least an equal value. Now, the principle

of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, and the hon. Member for Somersetshire, and the protectionists generally, is, that in purchasing any foreign article we expend so much of British capital which might be better laid out at home in the employment of British industry—that it abstracts so much from what would otherwise be laid out on our home trade. If consistent, therefore, they would think it desirable to stop all our imports, and of course all our exports, for they would not have us send them away for no return. Well then, here is an extinguisher put on all our foreign trade (out and in), to the amount of 100 millions and more. According to their principles we should be better off without it—better if it had never existed—better if Berkeley's famous wall of brass surrounded the island, instead of the sea—better if Britain, instead of being queen of the ocean, and making every corner of the globe tributary to her wants, had been confined to her own narrow limits, and to the consumption of what she can produce within herself. Now, not to speak of the utter annihilation of the acknowledged source of Great Britain's wealth, power, and greatness—her foreign commerce—I ask only, do hon. Members seriously believe that her home trade, their pet business, would be improved by such a state of things—that the ruin which would fall on the millions now employed in the foreign trade could be compensated by the employment of one more workman in the home trade? Do they not feel certain, on the contrary, that to put a stop to our foreign trade, would equally put a stop to an immense amount of the home trade which indirectly arises from the employment of our people in providing goods to meet the foreign demand? The home trade and the foreign trade are by these reasoners supposed to be antagonist to each other—that one must lose as the other gains. As justly in the human body might the arms grudge the nourishment that goes to the legs, and desire that the latter should be cut off to strengthen them. Our country, deprived of its foreign trade would be as feeble and helpless as a human frame deprived of the means of locomotion—of the members which fetch and carry for it everything beyond its immediate grasp. But the hon. Member drew another affecting picture. He exhibited another victim to the stern dogma of a cold political economy, in a farmer whose forefathers, for generations back, had occupied the same farm, which he still continued to cultivate in their antiquated fashion, and who is now to be turned out of his farm by his landlord acting on the cruel and hard principle of making the most of his property, in order to put in his place a capitalist of the Mechi school, who will raise five quarters of wheat where he only raises three. Sir, I do not undervalue the feelings which link an ancient tenantry to an hereditary race of landowners. I am as sensible as any one can be to the pain of dispossessing an old tenant of this class; but this, like all our best feelings, must always be controlled by our reason. Let the hon. Member consider if, by the indulgence of a very amiable feeling in this supposed case, he would not be doing a very cruel instead of a kind action. Let him recollect that a poor, unimproving race of farmers will always be surrounded by a wretched, ill-paid, discontented, and demoralized peasantry; that the new farmer, who produces five quarters of wheat where his predecessor produced but three, will employ two labourers where the first employed but one, and pay them half as much again in wages. By the side of the hon. Member's picture of an ejected farmer of the old unimprovable school, I will place, as its necessary accompaniment, the crowd of Goatacre or Bremhill labourers, but half-paid, half-employed, half-fed, half-alive. Would it be really a sad thing to exchange a barren district, inhabited by slovenly and poor farmers and starving idle labourers, for one highly cultivated and farmed by intelligent capitalists, raising double the produce, and employing twice the number of well-paid and comfortable labourers? But this, though introduced by the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, is, after all, beside the question. If the landlord prefer bad tenants to good—if he persist in retaining on his farms the old race of farmers, who plough with six horses, waste half their manure, and let the rains which heaven sends to fertilize his fields lie upon them for want of drainage tiles, till his crops are rotted, and the ground produces nothing but weeds—he can do so as well after the Corn Law is repealed as before. All we ask is that we should not be compelled by law to pay for his indulgence of an amiable weakness; that if landlords and their tenants will not make the most of the soil of this country between them, so as to produce as much corn as we want, that we should be permitted to buy it where we can. In truth, it is not by an appeal to the feelings that this question is to

be determined, but by sound reasoning and solid argument. I have placed before the House one form of this argument, and to me a convincing one, to show that whether Corn Laws raise the price of Corn or do not, they are an unjustifiable interference with the freedom of industry. Nor has there been, in my opinion, a single argument of the slightest weight produced in the course of this debate to show that we can be warranted in such interference by any considerations. The onus of proof, if proof there can be, rests upon you who would restrict and fetter the industry of the people. I call on you then no longer to maintain these laws—laws odious in character and questionable in motive. I call on you no longer to interfere between the people and their spontaneous supplies of food—no longer by unwise and unjust laws to prevent the industrious classes of this country from availing themselves of the ample means which God and nature have placed at their disposal for obtaining, by the exercise of their unrivalled skill and energy, an abundant supply of the first necessaries of life.

Mr. NEWDEGATE said, that, taking the argument of the hon. Member for Stroud against the "apparel" of the hon. Member for Northamptonshire for what it was worth, he had good right to defend the hon. Member for Northamptonshire from the charge of not adhering in his own person to the principle of protection. While protection existed on the articles he wore, he did not violate his principles in using them. The retaining of protection had been alluded to as a bar to agricultural improvement; but all he (Mr. Newdegate) could say was, that Northamptonshire was a most unlucky specimen of an unimproved county. Hon. Members opposite, generally for the purposes of free-trade argument, and in order to prove their own case, described the agriculturists as the advocates of prohibition, not of protection. His understanding of their doctrine of free-trade was, "buying in the cheapest market, and selling in the dearest." He acknowledged it as the true principle of trade; but he denied it to be the true principle of government. It was not the function of a Government merely to increase wealth; but its function was to secure the peace, happiness, and welfare of the people. He could not understand that a principle which was true when applied to trade, must necessarily be true when applied to government. If the Government were to proceed upon this principle of free trade, they would not be justified in their mode of conducting their national defence. In the case of their army, were they to adopt the principle of buying in the cheapest market, there could be no doubt but that they could hire men to act as soldiers cheaper elsewhere than in England; but then those soldiers would not have the spirit nor the feelings of Britons, and would be deficient in the qualities they required from them. As to the arguments on the other side, with respect to whether a repeal of the Corn Laws must or must not reduce the price of corn, hon. Gentlemen overlooked the consideration that these laws were enacted to ensure steadiness of price. Now, if they always tried to buy in the cheapest market, they must sometimes buy also very dearly; for hunger would not wait for the political economists to feed it. It was his opinion that 1842 was a most unlucky instance for the political economists; because, the derangement in their affairs was caused by their relations with America, which produced a reaction upon their monetary system. He begged of their political economists—of those who advocated an unlimitable extension of their foreign relations, to bear these facts in mind; because the years 1841 and 1842 afforded a frightful instance of the consequence of this country depending much upon foreigners. Hon. Gentlemen said, that it was very hard upon the manufacturers they should have the Corn Law taxes in addition to the other taxes. The manufacturers did not pay more taxes than the rest of the community. This was a question of justice. Could the political economists assert that manufacturers were the majority of the population? The evidence before that House proved the opposite to be the fact. The laws which they impugned gave protection to the majority; and laws which protected the interests of the majority were always considered to be those which were most for the benefit of the community. Having said thus much, he wished to address himself to the subject before the House—a subject on which Her Majesty's Ministers had abandoned their former principles, and forsaken their former opinions. For himself, he must say, that he was not so much surprised at this change as others had been. His opinion had been that some such change was likely to occur: he had seen that such a change was impending since 1844—he then foresaw, and then foretold, this lamentable change. He did so when

he heard the arguments used—when he saw the anxiety manifested, by the right hon. Baronet, to make this country dependent in its monetary system upon foreign exchanges. The measures of the right hon. Baronet—the measure then, and that now before them—would make them doubly dependent upon foreigners: the first would make them dependent upon foreigners for the wherewithal to buy food; and the second would make them dependent upon foreigners for a very great part of their food. Seeing this, he had looked forward with the greatest apprehension to the measures to be proposed this Session. Some of the leading Members of Her Majesty's Government had now repudiated the arguments, the speeches, and the writings for which the country had been indebted to them during many years. They had, as he conceived, committed political suicide. Such was, such must be, the effect of this measure; still he had not heard the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government repudiate some of the sentiments to which he had given utterance last Session upon this subject, and to which he (Mr. Newdegate) had listened with deep attention last July. In referring to that speech, he wished to show how suddenly this change had come upon the country—how perfectly unprepared the people must have been for any such change as that which had now occurred. The speech of the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government was an able argument for the maintenance of the Corn Law, to show that its tendency was to secure a steadiness of price; and he also proved that under it there had been a great increase and activity in the manufacturing system. He also proved that in September, 1844, the price of wheat was 45*s.* 2*d.*; and he then appealed to the manufacturing interest, whether that was an unreasonable price whilst the law kept a large stock in bond ready for consumption, an immense advantage he now proposed to abandon. The right hon. Baronet also then gave utterance to this sentiment, that "the landlords and proprietors in this country, at least in great districts of it, do not look on land in the light of a mere commercial speculation," and that he believed "that it would be a great evil if they did so." He also added, that "though the land may be so regarded, yet in every thing but a purely commercial sense, in a social and moral point of view, he should deeply regret it." How did the expression of such a feeling accord with the present measure? How was the landlord to confer such social benefits upon his poorer neighbours and tenants if the entire relations between them were to be conducted upon purely commercial principles? But the right hon. Gentleman went further when he said, that "if those principles of free trade were adopted, they would be extended to all their colonial relations." Now he must say, that he had heard nothing from the right hon. Baronet to justify a change in those opinions; and he thought the speech that had been made by the hon. and gallant Member for Liverpool (Sir H. Douglas) must have shown the evil effects to be anticipated from free trade upon our colonial system. He could not, for his part, conceive how it was possible that a great statesman, unless forced by an overwhelming necessity, should have abandoned a policy to which he was pledged by acts and professions for many years. He could not conceive how a policy so adhered to could be at once shaken off and opposed. This, he said, he could not conceive, though he feared there was one principle which might be detected in all these proceedings—it was one to which the right hon. Baronet would be found to have adhered through weal and through wo, amidst the many principles he had abandoned. He was afraid it had much to do with the right hon. Baronet's strict adherence to his monetary policy. The right hon. Baronet had restricted the currency to the smallest amount possible; and, perhaps, the right hon. Baronet, by establishing a kind of barter with foreign countries, sought to compensate in some manner for that restriction. It seemed to him that some vain scheme of that kind had been entertained; but if they established large and wide relations with foreigners, on his principle of barter, still things must eventually find their level; and if an emergency occurred in either country—an emergency arising from the action of high prices in this country upon foreign exchanges, when our bullion would be exported—or arising from disturbances in those countries with which we had commercial relations; our monetary embarrassment must recur with this additional aggravation, that we, by the present measure, shall have removed the only barrier that stood between the people and dire distress, whilst their commercial and monetary embarrassments would remain the same. He trusted that the House would excuse him whilst he at-

tempted to explain the basis upon which he formed his opinions. It was painful and disagreeable to him to differ from the right hon. Baronet. He was in some respects the representative of the right hon. Baronet, who possessed a very large property in that county for which he was returned. He could, however, allow no considerations of friendship, or recollections of former kindness, to stand between him and his duty to his constituents, nearly the whole of whom must suffer by the application to them of these measures. He had to remember that many of his constituents were engaged in agriculture—many in the ribbon and silk trade—many in the hatting trade, and many in hardware manufactures. If, then, they carried the present principles of Her Majesty's Government into effect, they would expose the whole of his constituents to a competition that must be deeply injurious to them ; and he felt his first duty was, to represent and protect their interests. Could it, he asked, be just to apply this principle of free trade to every class, because it happened to suit some? Some trades did not need protection ; in these the machinery had arrived to such perfection, that they could overbear the competition of foreigners ; but in the great mass and variety of trades carried on in this country, it would be found that a large majority was to be injured by the application of this principle. Hon. Gentlemen admitted that they could not have a partial application of the principle ; and if they began by withdrawing the Corn Law—the key-stone of protection—they would find that they would have to follow up the principle until they produced—which they must and would do—a state of almost universal distress. If we escaped a convulsion under such circumstances, it would only be by reverting to the policy under which this country had so long prospered. The right hon, Gentleman the Home Secretary (Sir J. Graham) said, in the course of last Session, that the object of successive Governments for the last twenty-five years had been, first, to substitute protective for prohibitory duties ; and again, when protective duties had been imposed gradually and progressively, to relax the extent of that protection. But he had now undertaken a new step. Mr. Huskisson was an advocate of moderate protection, though not of prohibition. Hitherto, the right hon. Baronet also had been the advocate of moderate protection ; but now, alas! he had changed his principles, and said, "nothing but extreme urgency shall justify the retention of protection—my principle is free trade, and if I grant protection to the extreme necessity of some suffering part of the population, it is a boon." Was this, he asked, a just or wise principle for the paternal Government of a great country, charged with the care of every individual in it? He thought it was scarcely deserving the name of a paternal Government. He came now to consider whether prices had been excessive in this country under the system of protection ; whether the relaxations which had already taken place had not much depressed them ; and whether we had not gone as far in that direction as the circumstances of the country justified? First, let them consider how stood the question with the protected class, and whether the landowners had grown rich and fat at the expense of the people, as it was said, upon the system of protection. Since the right hon. Baronet, in alluding to the years from 1815, had thought it necessary to make allowance for the depreciation of the currency—and the currency was depreciated on the average of ten years preceding 1820 about 10 per cent.—how much, he desired to know, had it been appreciated since? Mr. Ricardo, who was the advocate of that measure of 1819, confessed, before he died, that it had appreciated or raised the value of the currency to the extent of 14 per cent. The right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary once thought, that the advantage which money had gained over labour since 1819 was somewhere about 35 per cent., an opinion of which he (Mr. Newdegate), could not divest himself. Without forgetting these considerations, however, he should not disturb the exposition he would endeavour to give the House by any further reference to them ; suffice it then, that on the average of the ten years previous to 1820, the depreciation of the currency amounted to about 10 per cent. According to the Property Tax Returns, the rental of the land in England, Wales, and Scotland, in the year 1814,was 39,405,705*l.*, and in 1843 it was 45,753,615*l.*, showing an increase upon those thirty years of 6,347,910*l.* True : but this increase included 1,539,670*l.* of commuted tithes, and, therefore, the real increase was, in round numbers, about 4,813,945*l.* annual rental. Then what was the rental of houses, which were a class of property that did not require protection? In 1814, the value of house property, including factories, warehouses, and all other

buildings used for the purposes of trade, was 16,259,399*l.*; and, in 1843, it was as much as 38,475,738*l.*, showing an increase in that period of 22,216,339*l.* Thus, the fostered land—this land which it was said had been so unduly fostered by protection, had increased in value 12 per cent. in the 30 years, whilst the value of house property had increased more than 140 per cent., or nearly twelve times the amount of the former. How, then, could it be said, that the landowners had fattened and grown rich upon the distress of the country? In that period had the agricultural interest been idle? Had they not produced more? Had they not expended more capital in the enclosure and improved cultivation of land? And what was the result of their labours? Why, that the increase in the production of grain, taking the United Empire from 1814 up to 1841, amounted to 18,002,879 quarters; the increase in the population being 10,861,779; showing that the production of the land of England, in the last thirty years, had increased about 50 per cent. Was this a proof of sloth, of the want of enterprise, or the non-application of capital on the part of the agriculturists? The increase in population, in the period alluded to, was something more than 50 per cent.—he believed it was 57 per cent.; but these unjust laws, forsooth, without raising the price of corn to an inordinate degree had admitted 7½ per cent. on the whole consumption of the country at a price of about 56*s.* the quarter—that was leaving the price at 56*s.* or 57*s.* the quarter. Could they trace many periods of scarcity in which great suffering had occurred? Could they find the same fluctuations in price in this country that were to be found abroad? And had they any right to say the landlords had fattened upon the distresses of the country? Now, let the House consider whether no strain had been put upon the industry of the country. Let them consider whether capital had gained nothing in this period; and by capital he meant money in its exchangeable value. The observation of the right hon. Baronet as to the depreciation of 10 per cent. in the currency previous to the year 1820, applied as much to commodities as to house property and land, and to corn as much as to either. For the five years from 1815, upon the cessation of war, when the currency was recovering, the Corn Law inefficient, and a short harvest, to the year 1819 inclusive, the average price of wheat was 80*s.* 4*d.* the imperial quarter. The noble Lord the Member for the city of London having dealt in the argument that "protection was the bane of agriculture," and that all the evils of the country arose out of the existence of the Corn Laws, he (Mr. Newdegate) had deemed it proper to divide the period of thirty years at those times when the Corn Law had undergone alteration. In 1820 and 1821 the effects of the Bill of 1819, as the right hon. Baronet admitted the other night, were being experienced in the country. That measure overbore the Corn Laws; the harvests were abundant, and the result was that, with an average harvest, the price of wheat fell from 80*s.* 4*d.* to 44*s.* 7*d.* the quarter. The Corn Law was then found to be inefficient, and in 1822 it was again altered. The harvests were average, and the price of wheat, which for the two preceding years had been 61*s.* 11*d.* the quarter, was reduced again to 56*s.* 2*d.*, which was the average of the years from 1822 to 1827. The average of the years from 1828 to 1841 was 58*s.* 11*d.* the quarter, and for the last four years—namely, from 1841 to 1845, it had been 52*s.* 8*d.* imperial quarter. This showed that since the peace, with an abundance which had been unknown in other countries, whilst the rental of land had increased but four millions sterling, or only 12 per cent., the price of corn had fallen 34 per cent. And what had been the case with trade? Let the House look to the manufacturer, and by taking the official value, which was a fixed value according to an ancient standard, and therefore a fair test, they could ascertain the depreciation on manufacturing industry. It was a singular fact that in the year 1819 the declared or real value, which had always, previously to that year, been greater than the official value, fell below it, and had never since recovered, showing very remarkably how our currency system operates to the depreciation of labour. What had been proved to be the amount of that depreciation? Why, that between 1819 and 1841, the official value exceeded the declared or actual value by 96 per cent.; that was to say, money, the value of which was fixed by law, had gained a command over manufactured produce, and all produce exported, to the extent of 96 per cent. Had they not, in the same degree, taxed the industry and labour of the people of this country? He had now shown the House how far the value of agricultural produce was depressed; how far, as proved by the test

he had applied, (which they could not deny was a fair one), the value of our exports was depressed, and also to what extent the monied man had gained by the depreciation of labour. It was under the circumstances he had described that it was proposed to remove the protection which still remained to the industry of the people, whilst the currency was to be left in its present state. What had been the characteristics of the period to which his remarks had applied, and which had deservedly been termed "non-protective?" It had been decidedly a period marked by the unequal distribution of property, and the merging of the trade or profitable pursuits of those who employed their labour, joined with small capital, into the hands of those great capitalists who were urging the present changes. He would now allude to another point, which constituted a favourite argument of those who were anxious to abolish the protection enjoyed by agriculture. It was the denial of the existence of peculiar burdens on land. The hon. Member for Sheffield denied the existence of these burdens; whilst the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) declared that, because the agricultural interest would not consent to the Committee which the hon. Member for Sheffield proposed, therefore they were not entitled, forsooth, to have those burdens considered in any adjust ment of the corn question. So far from agreeing with the hon. Member for Sheffield, it was his (Mr. Newdegate's) firm belief that those burdens amounted to upwards of 12,000,000*l.* annually, in which sum he included tithes. It was commonly argued that tithes were not a burden on land; but he would produce the opinion of a competent authority, and one which the free traders could not question, upon the point. Mr. Ricardo most decidedly numbered tithes among the burdens upon agriculture; and surely hon. Gentleman opposite would not dispute his authority, if they left any authority undisputed. He would then take the instance selected by Mr. M'Culloch, a strenuous advocate for free trade. That gentleman quoted Dr. Paley, who, he said, could not be regarded as unfriendly to the real interests of the Church, and who had observed, "Of all institutions which were adverse to cultivation and improvement, none was so obnoxious as that of tithes." Yet this was represented to be no burden by some hon. Gentlemen. Dr. Smith said, "Tithe is always a great discouragement, both to the improvements of the landlord and the cultivation of the farmers. They cannot venture to make the most important, which are generally the most expensive, improvements." Hon. Members opposite would not, he hoped, dispute these authorities. Free traders must admit that the authority of Mr. Ricardo, of Mr. M'Culloch, of Dr. Paley, and Dr. Smith, who were all likely to take different views of the subject, might justify the agricultural interest in regarding tithes as a burden. If so, how were the various burdens made up? The tithe uncommuted in 1843 amounted to 1,960,338*l.* per annum, and the tithe commuted to 1,539,670*l.*; together, 3,500,000*l.* The land-tax, after excluding for town property the sum of 550,000*l.*, amounted in the same year to 1,308,924*l.* The county rate was 871,215*l.* The excess of poor rate paid by the land, over and above that paid by house property, amounted to 1,000,000*l.* The average malt tax for three years, previous to 1844, was 4,188,263*l.* The highway rate in 1839 amounted 1,169,891*l.*; and—let the House mark this item—the levy under Schedule B for the property-tax amounted in 1843 to 298,763*l.*! He included that item because the farmer was the only tradesman who was forbidden "to plead no profits." These various sums added together gave a gross total of 12,339,064*l.* He had laid these items before the House, because he knew that if anything were left unexplained, it was at once set down to the disadvantage of the agricultural interest. Hon. Members opposite might dispute the pressure of every one of these items, and he was ready to meet them on that point; but they must first disprove them. The onus of the case lay with them, and they had not yet been able to show by any returns they had procured, or by any arguments they had adduced, that these were not burdens borne by the land. It might be supposed, if he left his statement where it was, that he would willingly see all those burdens commuted, and that he was ready to give up protection, and take some money compensation for it. Now, in the first place, his opinion was, that compensation was impossible; and, in the next place, even if it were possible, it would not be advantageous to accept it. But the following quotation would express his sentiments upon this point better than any language of his own:—

"All those who value genuine piety, the pure offspring of the Established Church, and who, unprejudiced by the abuse of the Poor Laws, still venerate their human origin and appreciate their utility, when cautiously administered; all these (and they form the best part of the community)

will strenuously resist any change of the security, any transfer of the charge from land to funds. The clergy and the landowners, the poor and the proprietors, are copartners in the soil; they must stand or fall together on their existing tenure; they may fall, indeed, but religion, mercy, and justice will fall with them; 'and they who are buried in these ruins are happier than they who survive them.'"

Now, these were the words of one of the authors of the measure under discussion; they were the words of the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, written some years ago—repudiated last week! He had often heard the effects of a relaxation in the silk duties referred to as an argument in favour of free trade. But was it true that the silk trade had not suffered from the removal of protection? and, he asked, were the goods now produced more valuable than they were; or were they as valuable, in comparison with their bulk and quality? The Government must know that they were not; and he wished to be informed why it was that the refuse now worked up by our industrious operatives, which came under the head of husks of silk, was included in the quantities imported, upon which the right hon. Baronet had founded his statement of the effects of relaxed protection; as though the material imported had been all of a nearly similar quality, whereas the quality of a great part was known to be incomparably inferior to real silk. Before he sat down, he wished to express what he understood by the term protection. By protection, he understood a principle which he upheld, not implying prohibition, but the regulation of trade. He considered the maintenance of protection as much a part of the functions and duty of Government as protection of the person; and he considered that the rule by which it should be regulated should be the good of the majority; that the limitation of it should be, that whilst the good of the majority was to be first consulted, the interests of the minority should not be unduly sacrificed. He considered the application of this principle was as much the function of Government as the administration of justice. He had endeavoured to express the reasons upon which he founded his opinions—opinions which he had not taken up lightly: and he could not conceive, if a vast majority of that House had maintained those opinions for years, that it was profitable, in a constitutional point of view, at the dictation of a Minister, who had proved himself the master and dictator of his Cabinet, that they should at once yield them up. Although the tone of the right hon. Baronet had been somewhat altered of late, yet he confessed that, coupling it with his expressions relating to the aristocracy and the monarchy, he could not, when he heard those expressions, help looking at that ensign of the authority of that House (the mace on the Table), and thinking that it was well that the Statute Books lay between the right hon. Baronet and that ensign of our authority: for he held that such conduct as that of the right hon. Baronet, overbearing the opinion of his Colleagues; concealing his principles, to take the country by surprise; working by force upon those who had long followed him, until he had overborne their better judgment; and then going over to their adversaries and adopting their policy—such conduct as that was not the conduct of a constitutional Minister; it was injurious to the freedom and liberties of the subject; and until the right hon. Baronet had subjected his change of conduct and principle to the decision of the constitutional tribunal, the constituency of the country, he had a right to assert that the right hon. Baronet was the Minister of Her Majesty's necessity, and not of Her choice—Her Majesty had indicated Her choice by calling in another—and he believed that he was also the Minister of the necessity of the country, and not of the people's choice. Although the right hon. Baronet might be the same man, he was not now the same Minister; and he thought he held his present position by a tenure more than questionable in a constitutional point of view. It was true, that of late the Government had adopted a somewhat milder tone; but he must say, it was unusual in that House to hear a Member of the Government—he alluded to the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of War (Mr. Sidney Herbert)—say that if they (the protectionists) did not yield now, they would have to yield to force. He was not surprised when he heard such language as that used by leaders of agitation; but when a Minister of the Crown thus turned round upon those who had faithfully supported him, it was as though he said to them with a threat, "Give up your principles, or yield to force." He really thought that phrase was, to say the least of it, an unwise expression. Such language, he thought, ill became an English Minister. It inclined one to look round and ask, "Where are these men who will subdue us?" He rejoiced to see the talent and determination

which had been evinced by that which was now a broken party—a party which had been taken at a shameful disadvantage; but he told those hon. Gentlemen with whom he (Mr. Newdegate) acted, to persevere. They would yet need perseverance. They were charged with a great and a patriotic cause; and, unless he was greatly mistaken, their country would hereafter appreciate their conduct. He would allude to one other subject. It had been said to them, they were raising dissensions among the different classes of the community; and he had a right to appeal to the previous conduct of their party to ask whether such a thing was probable. They had been told that they were creating a War of the Roses; that they were setting classes one against the other; and the noble Lord the proposer of the Address (Lord F. Egerton) asked them not to do so. Now, he (Mr. Newdegate) asked whether the constitution of their party gave ground for such an accusation? Had they not a Plantagenet and a Baring amongst them? Had they not a Granby, a Miles, and an Arkwright—men derived from and connected with various and different classes? Such an accusation as that implied an utter want of knowledge of those of whom their accusers spoke—an utter want of knowleege of their character, their habits, and their pursuits.

Mr. BARKLY: As one of those who have most recently obtained a seat in this House, I should have nothing to plead in justification of a reference to the exciting topics connected with the past history of these discussions, which has formed the chief staple of the speeches on this side. It is one of the few advantages which my inexperience in political life confers upon me, that I am able to approach the consideration of this question as calmly and deliberately as that of any other of equal magnitude and of equal importance to the social and commercial interests of this country. True, Sir, I belong to the protected classes; true, the constituents who have done me the honour to send me here, suppose themselves to be interested in maintaining protection; but this is only an additional reason why I should be careful not to allow my judgment to be biassed by self-interest or prejudice. I consider the question, therefore, simply to be, whether it will conduce more to the interests of the British Empire to carry into fuller effect those doctrines respecting freedom of commercial intercourse with foreign nations, which have so materially influenced the legislation of the last twenty years; or whether it will be wiser, once and for all, to make our stand upon those principles of protection to native industry, which have been interwoven with the social system of this country for centuries. I am not presumptuous enough to expect to throw any new light on so wide and complex a theme; one to be solved rather by facts and figures in the closet of the statesman, than by eloquence or invective in the arena of public debate. My own opinion has been, ever since I was entitled to have one, that the leading doctrines of political economy with respect to trade, were as true and as capable of demonstration as the propositions of Euclid. But at the same time I have always held that it was necessary to apply those doctrines with great caution and due consideration for the complicated interests which have been created by a system of policy totally different; and that protection to agriculture, especially, was one of those points on which it was incumbent that the return to a sounder system should be made as gradual as possible. In spite of the taunts of hon. Members opposite, I still think that there is nothing irrational or impractical in that belief. If there be, I wonder how they can support the Resolutions of the right hon. Baronet. Sir, on this ground I gave my vote last year against the Motion of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton; on this ground, I must in candour admit, I should this Session have voted against any similar proposition emanating from the same quarter had circumstances remained unchanged. But, Sir, the case assumes a different aspect in my eyes when the leader of the Conservative party, at the head of a united Cabinet, brings forward not a lop-sided proposition for the abolition of protection to agriculture only, like that of the hon. Member, but a comprehensive scheme for the ultimate repeal of almost all restrictions on foreign trade; and though I may still be of opinion, that had the circumstances of the country permitted, it would have been better to accomplish so immense a revolution more gradually than we are forced to do—though I may regret, on party grounds, that the task has devolved on the present House of Commons—I, for one, dare not assume, for such trifling objections, the tremendous responsibility of declining to enter into a full examination of the effect which these protective duties have had upon the supply of food and the demand for the labour of

the people of this country, while there is yet time for a peaceable settlement of the question. I do not mean to say by this that the change of one man's opinion, however eminent he may be, or the change of twenty men's opinions, should lead me to support measures which I considered wrong in principle; but looking at this question as I have described it, as one simply relating to our rate of progression towards free trade, I do maintain that the simultaneous advance in the views of the leaders of the two great parties in this House does materially affect both the feasibility and the policy of maintaining restrictions on the trade in corn. This fact affords in itself *primâ facie* evidence of an overruling necessity for the immediate settlement of the question. It is easy to assign unworthy motives for that advance in the views—I will not call it a change in the opinions—on either part: to ascribe it to the influence of agitation is no solution of the cause; for agitation, to be thus powerful and thus successful, it must surely be based on some great principle of truth. The real reason of that alteration of policy was the alarm of a bad harvest, the dread of an insufficient supply of food for the people of this country. That alarm may or may not have been well-founded. Time alone can prove that; but it served as an awful warning. It brought conviction to the minds not of Cabinet Ministers only, but of thousands who had before satisfied themselves with the belief that the distress of 1839 to 1841 was to be accounted for solely by the incapacity of the Ministry of that day; by overproduction of our manufactures; by a deranged system of currency; by any of those minor accessaries, which in times of political excitement are so easily magnified into all-sufficient causes. This alarm, and the agitation which preceded and no doubt inflamed it, is founded on causes of no temporary nature; it is of no evanescent description. It can be traced home only to those awful monitors, our Population Abstracts. When a stringent Corn Law was first imposed in 1791, we were then chiefly an agricultural people: even at the commencement of the present century, when our first census was taken, the number of persons in Great Britain dependent on agricultural employment, probably exceeded two-fifths of the whole population; in 1821 it had diminished to one-third, or 33 per cent; and in 1841 to 22 per cent, or less than one-fourth of the community. Meantime the skill of our manufacturers and the natural advantages they enjoy, have enabled them not only to supply the home market with goods of the cheapest description, but to increase their exports from 22,000,000*l.* in 1792, to 58,000,000*l.* in 1845; so that at least one-fourth of their workmen are dependent on foreign markets for their livelihood. Hence that protection, which in the infancy of the manufacturing system was so loudly clamoured for by the manufacturers, is now repudiated by them. The right hon. Baronet quoted the other night a well-known passage from the Wealth of Nations, to prove that the landed interest only followed the example of the manufacturers in applying for protective duties for their corn and cattle, as if any doubt were entertained of the accuracy of Adam Smith in this assertion: it is sufficient to look to the conduct of the manufacturers in the United States, or in France, or within the precincts of the Zollverein. In these countries it is the manufacturers who clamour for monopoly—the producers of agricultural produce who are in favour of free trade. It is absurd, therefore, and injurious to the cause of truth, for the Anti-Corn-Law League to plume themselves upon their superior enlightenment, and to boast an intelligence surpassing that of the agriculturists, since it is evidently self-interest alone that prompts their agitation. Still, even on this ground the manufacturers are entitled to a fair hearing, and to impartial justice at the hands of this House. They allege that the operation of the present Corn Law, is in the best of seasons, to limit the quantity of their manufactures which foreigners can take in exchange; and that when the harvest in this country is deficient, they are either excluded from competing in neutral markets by the comparatively high wages necessitated by the high price of food, or that they are involved in disputes with their workmen, because they cannot afford to pay them enough to maintain them in comfort. They allege further, that the example of Great Britain in establishing prohibitory and protective duties, has led other countries to impose and to maintain similar duties on articles of British manufacture; and that the demand for the produce of their skill and labour is thereby materially limited. Now, Sir, connected as I am, by interests and by sympathy, exclusively with the class which demands the continuance of protection, I can, nevertheless, not disguise from myself that these allegations of our manufacturers

are founded in truth, and that however exaggerated the expectations they may entertain of the advantages which free trade in corn will confer upon them, they would be entitled, were it merely a question between themselves and the agricultural interest, to claim, in common justice, the restoration of trade to its natural and unrestricted state. Personally, from our tastes and habits, we may regret being accessary to the further extension which the removal of these restrictions must give to the manufacturing system. We may view its progress with alarm, because having no similar example before us in history we may well doubt whither it tends. But such regrets are unavailing here: our duty is to to legislate on principles of justice for the present as it is, not to arraign the wisdom of Providence, because it is not what we suppose it ought to be. We might as well propose to abandon agriculture, and become a nation of hunters or shepherds, as attempt to check the onward progress of our manufacturing system. Nor ought we to desire to do so. Nations, like individuals, are responsible for the due exercise of the advantages with which God has endowed them. When we are disposed to regret that we are no longer an agricultural people, let us remember that the vast treasures of mineral wealth which this country possesses—its coal and its iron—were not bestowed on it to lie idle; but were entrusted to it with the glorious mission of diffusing by their means commerce and civilization to the ends of the earth. Sir, I have stated that if this were merely a question between the interests of the manufacturers and the agriculturists, the latter must in fairness give way; but I am aware that these protective duties are defended by many on far higher grounds—that they are believed to be essential to the prosperity and independence of the nation at large. This argument, as to national independence, I must own has had great weight on my mind; though in proportion as I have investigated the grounds on which ts rests, that weight has diminished. We are told that the British corngrower, not being able to stand the competition of the foreigner, a great quantity of land in this country will be thrown out of cultivation, and we shall become dependent on foreign nations for a great part of our supply of food. This presumed inability on our part to compete in the production of corn is referred to the greater taxation to which our farmers are subject. The hon. Member for Sunderland put the argument in the popular form, when he said we owe eight hundred millions: taxes to an enormous amount must be annually raised to pay the interest; and these taxes enhance the cost of all articles on which they are levied. I suppose the hon. Member did not intend to assert that other countries pay no taxes. He put the case of an English shoemaker, indeed, and asked how he could possibly compete with the French shoemaker; as if he thought that there were no taxes in France. Has he never heard of the octroi, or dues levied at the entrance of every town on provisions and fuel? Has he never heard of the foncier, that heavy tax upon the rent and profits of the farmer, which must of course ultimately fall on the consumer? Why, Sir, a Committee of this House reported in 1821, that the taxation of other countries, compared with their resources, was heavier than our own. Without going this length, let us take the case of Holland, the country most similarly situated to ourselves in regard to density of population and magnitude of debt. In that country, according to Mr. Macgregor, the annual taxation amounts to 26*s.* per head, or 6*s.* or 7*s.* less than our own, and yet it suffers under so mitigated a form of the sliding-scale, that wheat is admitted at a nominal duty of 1*s.* 3*d.*, when the home price is 45*s.* per quarter. And what is the effect of this? Is Holland thereby rendered dependent on foreign countries for its daily bread? On the contrary, it grows nearly a quarter of wheat for every inhabitant; while at the same time an immense import and export corn trade is carried on, which would inevitably secure a steady price, were it not for the disturbing influence of our sliding-scale. I have alluded only to public taxation: the hon. Member for Warwickshire complained, however, of local taxation. Sir, all I can say is, that if that press, as is alleged, unfairly upon the land, the sooner the subject is investigated the better. If it can be shown that any excess of poor rate paid by land, any assessments borne by it which ought to be thrown on the Consolidated Fund, exceed the corresponding exemptions from legacy and probate duty, &c.; if it can be proved that the malt tax, the hop duty, the prohibition against growing tobacco—restrict the demand for the use of the soil, more than it is indemnified for by the differential duties on foreign and colonial spirits, by the exclusion of molasses from breweries and distilleries, by the protection still given

to butter and cheese—these are very good reasons indeed for a revision of our whole fiscal system as soon as the Corn Laws are at an end; but they are not reasons to stand in the way of a change otherwise desirable. I see no reason, therefore, to fear that our taxation, either public or local, will necessarily disable our farmers from competing with the cheaply produced corn of the foreigner. But after all, where is this immense supply of cheap corn to come from? The hon. Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson) indeed told us, that he had laid down wheat in 1837 at 25*s.* per quarter; but he did not tell us what quantity; he did not tell us why with the enormous profit he must have realized, he did not, following the bent of his comprehensive mind, extend his operations to half a million quarters, and thus make a fortune faster than at mere railway speed. Why, is it not notorious, that however low the price may be when there are no orders from this country, the demand for a few hundred thousand quarters of wheat at Dantzic or Odessa, raises the price at once to the level of our own markets, and causes freights and every thing else to rise in proportion? And what is the probability of any great increase from these countries? Have we not the reports of our Consuls abroad—of Mr. Jacob and others—showing that from their social condition, this is very distant and improbable. The hon. Member for Newport (Mr. W. Martin) went so fully into this branch of the subject the other night, that I will not weary the House with statistical details. I will only say, that nothing that fell from the hon. Member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles) in his geographical dissertation upon Poland and Russia refuted that speech, and as to his glowing description of the Valley of the Mississippi, I wonder he should refer to the imaginative De Tocqueville for his statements, when his hon. relative the Member for Bristol (Mr. P. Miles), who visited it about the same time as myself, could have so easily relieved his fears as to its becoming a great wheat-producing country, without millions of capital to drain and embank, and millions of population to cultivate it. Sir, if that authority were not enough, the hon. Member might have derived comfort from his hon. ally the Member for Roxburghshire (Mr. Scott), who stated that the great danger of free trade was, that Canada would dissolve her connexion with this country, in order to secure for her corn the better market of the United States. On a review of the whole question I think it is more to be apprehended, that we shall not continue to get foreign corn in as great quantities and as cheap as we now do, than that we shall draw any larger proportion of our supplies from abroad. For after all, Sir, what reason have we to flatter ourselves that we are at present independent of foreign supply. Have we not in the last five years—years generally of bountiful harvests—imported nearly 10,000,000 quarters of wheat, and never less than a million quarters in any one year? Are we not obliged to have recourse, whenever an unfavourable season occurs, to foreign countries, for at least 2,000,000 quarters, or about 20 per cent. of the produce of Great Britain? Is not, therefore, in fact a proportion of our population, varying from a fifth to a tenth, always dependent on imported food? This supposed independence of foreign supply, is really, after all, one of those political lies to which the hon. Member for Sheffield referred; and I cannot see that, in the event of the general war which is threatened, we should be worse off in respect of obtaining a foreign supply under a system of free trade, than we are now. At any rate it is only a question of degree; and, looking to the fact that we imported an annual average of 600,000 quarters throughout the last war, and that, as the noble mover of the Address reminded you, one and a half million quarters were imported in 1810, during the time when the Berlin and Milan decrees were most enforced; I think all experience justifies us in concluding that the danger on this score is much exaggerated. Besides, after all, a general war in both hemispheres can hardly burst upon us all at once; and a year or two, at most, would enable us to break up grass land, and to increase our production of wheat by other means even it were at the expense of a little cross cropping. Sir, on these grounds I conclude that there is no valid objection to a free trade in corn in a national point of view: it is certain that it must have a beneficial effect in many respects. But, Sir, desirable as free trade may be in a national point of view, I am bound, as the representative of a constituency dependent on the prosperity of agriculture, to see that it be carried out in a manner as little injurious as possible to the interests of the three great classes engaged in it—labourers, farmers, and landowners. First, as to the effect of a change in the Corn Law upon the interests of the agricultural labourer: this involves a preliminary inquiry as to what is his present

condition after thirty years of uninterrupted peace—thirty years of continued protection to agriculture. I have no disposition to exaggerate the hardships of that condition: sooner than be supposed to do so, I will simply assert what I believe no one will deny, that there is something altogether unsatisfactory in it, excepting, perhaps, in the neighbourhood of great towns and manufactories. I do not contend that it would necessarily have been otherwise if we had had a free trade in corn; I look for no permanent improvement from such a cause, since, even if any fall in the price of food thus produced were not eventually counterbalanced by a fall in wages, nothing is more certain than that the irresistible tendency of population to press upon the means of subsistence, would in a very few years reduce the labourer to his former condition. That condition can only be permanently improved by his moral elevation; and I do most fervently join in the hope expressed by the hon. and learned Member for Bath, that advantage will be taken of the opportunity which a temporary cheapness of food will afford us to improve the physical condition and to provide education for the poorer classes of this vast Empire. I do not, I repeat, attribute the present condition of the labourer to the Corn Laws: all I allege is, that that condition is not such that I can conscientiously make it a ground for resisting the abolition of the Corn Laws, if otherwise desirable. Bad, however, as it is, I still admit with thankfulness, that it is superior to that of the peasantry of most other countries in Europe; and when I hear it asserted, that by throwing these labourers into direct competition with the Russian serf or the Pomeranian boor, he will be inevitably reduced to the same standard of subsistence, the assertion certainly deserves investigation. There is something at first sight plausible enough in the argument, that the rate of wages in two countries competing with each other in the production of similar articles must be identical, and, *cæteris paribus*, they might be so; though even in this view it would be difficult to say why, by opening the corn trade, we have not at least as good a chance of conferring on our labourers the same command over the necessaries of life (for that really is the point, though hon. Gentlemen lose sight of it when they talk about money wages) as is enjoyed by those whose competition is so much dreaded on the banks of the Ohio, as of lowering them to the black bread which forms the common food on the banks of the Vistula or the Volga. But, in truth, the rate of wages in any particular country does not depend upon the amount paid for similar labour in competing countries, but, as has frequently been observed, upon the demand for labour in that country; and the demand for labour depends upon the wealth of that country in proportion to its population. If the surplus income of a country goes on accumulating faster than the population increases, the rate of wages is in no danger whatever of falling. This is no newfangled theory of political economy: we can appeal to every day's experience for its truth. In the United States, the most thriving community in the world, because the progressive increase of national capital is greater than in any other country, wages are 4*s.* or 5*s.* per day, while the price of a bushel of wheat is scarcely so much. If America be objected to, as not a corn-importing country, take Holland, to which I have already referred, and you will find wages are 1*s.* 3*d.* to 1*s.* 8*d.* per day, or very little below our own currency. But why look abroad, when we have sufficient proof under our very eyes to show how groundless is this alarm of lowering the condition of the peasantry of Great Britain by competition? For the last forty years they have been in unrestricted competition with a people as badly housed, as miserably clad, as wretchedly fed as any to be found in Europe, inhabiting a country, acre for acre, more fertile than Great Britain; where, in the words of an eminent writer, the land now cultivated might be made to yield three times the quantity it does, and where there exist millions of acres perfectly well adapted for cultivation, but which have never yet supplied a morsel of food for man. I refer, of course, to Ireland, which supplies us with three or four million quarters of grain and pulse, although our annual average importation of wheat and flour, notwithstanding all these inducements to British capitalists, still falls short of half a million quarters. Now, how has this wholesale competition affected our labourers' wages? I speak, not, of course, of the influx of Irish labourers into this country, which, no doubt, has had a lowering effect on the labour market—that is a separate question; but I ask, has this competition with Ireland reduced our labourer to the level of their Irish competitors in respect to food, clothing, and wages? Is 8*d.* per day the rate of wages; and do thousands of able-bodied men re-

main unemployed at that rate throughout the greater portion of the year? And if this is not the effect of a competition between England and Ireland under a free trade in corn, why should it be of that between England and Russia? Even admitting that a somewhat larger proportion of our food will be for a time grown abroad, and a somewhat smaller proportion at home, that would not necessarily influence wages; for if we import corn, we export manufactures to pay for it, so that the actual quantity of employment, the actual demand for labour, will be unaltered thereby. I know that there is an objection to this proposition, because it involves the transfer of labourers from agriculture to manufactures. I admit the force of it to a certain extent; for though Dukes have, I believe, subscribed to help the emigration of labour from Buckinghamshire to Lancashire, I am quite ready to allow that such an emigration would be attended with a snapping of ties, and a change of habits, productive of a certain degree of inconvenience and even suffering. Political economy is charged with estimating men as mere machines; I, at any rate, do not wish to do so; and I should certainly be averse to the transition to a state of free trade unaccompanied with greater precautions and safeguards on this head, if it had not pleased Providence to provide them ready to our hand at the present moment in the extension of the railway system. Sir, that extension has not been taken into account by the opponents of this measure in this point of view, though they have made the most of it as explaining the increased prosperity of the country during the last three years: another instance, it strikes me, of confusing cause and effect together—the construction of railways being rather the effect of national prosperity than the cause of it. The capital invested in them must either arise from an increase of the surplus income of the nation, which proves its previous prosperity, or it must be diverted from other channels in which it would equally have afforded employment to labour, and equally therefore have increased the consumption of taxable commodities. I turn, however, from this digression to consider how the proposed changes will affect the farmer. This is a point on which I do not feel qualified to go into detail, as I have little practical experience of agriculture. Hon. Gentlemen opposite have attempted to persuade the tenant-farmer that this is not a question that affects him; and no doubt, in the abstract, looking upon him as a mere manufacturer of food, the proposition is true; for, however much the price of corn may be lowered, the farmer must still get a remunerative return for the capital he applies to the land, either by giving a diminished proportion of its produce to the landlord, on the one hand, or to the labourer, on the other. The farmer's profit, as a mere agent in the cultivation of land, must be made up either from rent or wages, or he will cease to apply his capital to it. This is all true in the abstract; but it will be many years before it can become true in practice; and I am so far from thinking this merely a question of rent—I have already said I do not think it a question of wages—that I believe that, in fact, the farmer will have to bear the brunt of the effects of the change, whatever they may be. I believe that these effects will be worn off before the landlord's turn comes to be affected by them. I am quite aware, however, that a temporary drop of even a few shillings a quarter will be seriously felt by the farmers of England; and I have too high an opinion of the landlords of England to suppose that they will not make every allowance which the circumstances of their tenantry may require. At the same time it is a very shortsighted view to suppose that a decrease in the price of corn is so much dead loss to the farmer: of course, there must be a consequent decrease in farming charges; and though that decrease may have been exaggerated in the pamphlet of Trimmer and Moreton, upon the effects of protecting duties on agriculture, there is no doubt that the removal of the duty from maize, and its diminution on clover and other seeds, will be a very great boon to the farmer who has capital to take advantage of these relaxations; and I believe that the changes proposed on other points by Her Majesty's Government, in the Law of Settlement, and in the management of the highway rate, will be of material advantage to him. I say, the farmer who has capital, because the only anxiety I have is for that class of farmers which unfortunately has sprung up under the present system, and who do not possess a sufficient proportion of that requisite for the land which is entrusted to them—a class which has been much, I fear, sustained by the operation of the sliding-scale, by enabling them just to save their rents in unfavourable seasons by the high price of corn, and which, of course, without that

support, must be extinguished. But, after all, will it not be for the benefit of all classes that such should be the case, and that the land should not be entrusted to men who, as the expression is, starve it. The landlord will undoubtedly benefit: he will be able, by and by, to grant leases as is done in Scotland, where we have a superior class of tenants possessing abundant skill and capital. The tenant-farmer will benefit, not only by these leases, but by the competition for farms being confined to those who are in a legitimate position to compete. Even the poorer class of farmers —I cannot say the small farmers, for a small farmer may be as able to do justice to his land as the large farmer—will themselves benefit by being released from a false position. Finally, with regard to the effect of the abolition of the Corn Laws on the position of the landowner, it is asserted, and I fear truly, that a large portion of the landed interest is deeply encumbered, partly, no doubt, owing to the effects of settlements made during the high prices of war, and the subsequent resumption of a sounder system of currency; and an apprehension is entertained that, in the event of any sudden change which should lower rents, and thus diminish the saleable value of land, many mortgages would be foreclosed, and many ancient families ruined. I have already stated why I expect that such will not be the case. I look for no material alteration in the value of land; I think that the settlement of this great question, which has been so long impending, will cause a sufficient flow of capital to the land to sustain its value, even if rents should at first somewhat fall from the temporary abandonment of inferior soils. I think rents, however, more likely eventually to rise than to fall, and I have no fears for the landed interest. Should it be otherwise, no one would regret it more deeply than myself. The importance of an ancient territorial aristocracy, as contributing to maintain the balance of power in our mixed Constitution, is, I believe, undervalued by political writers, and they are too apt to treat the transfer of property from this class to those beneath as a mere matter of debtor and creditor. I concur in no such view; I entertain no other feelings than those of respect and regard for the landed gentry of this country; and I should look with aversion to the repeal of the Corn Laws, if I thought there were any risk of their ancestral mansions and venerable trees falling a prey to the moneylender, or even being transferred by any unnatural revolution, or to any undue extent, to the cotton lord or the railway potentate. But, Sir, it is because I do value a landed aristocracy, that I will not abet them in an encounter with the people upon so exciting a point as the supply of their food. It is said, this is not a popular question. True, it has not been made one; but it is a question upon which the middle classes are almost unanimous—those middle classes—those tenpounders—upon whom the Reform Bill conferred the power which it took partly from the higher classes, the boroughholders, partly from the lower classes, the scot and lot voters, and the potwallopers, &c. Depend upon it the middle class is in earnest on this subject; and if they once get angered and excited by a contest, they will disregard the consequences, and call in the democracy to their aid, as they called it in to carry that very Reform Bill by the prospect of political privileges, which they afterwards took care not to secure. Another time, however, the fierce tide of democracy may not be so easily checked, and your nomination boroughs, nay, your hereditary peerage and law of primogeniture, may fall a sacrifice before it is arrested. I know you do not apprehend this danger from what you call an appeal to the country. You look at the result of the last general election, and flatter yourselves that the cause of protection is still as strong as ever it was; but you deceive yourselves egregiously if you imagine that it was to the agricultural interest alone that the majority on this side of the House, at the commencement of the present Parliament, was attributable. You forgot that the influence of the commercial class, which forms the connecting link between the manufacturers and the agriculturist, was on your side. That influence turned the scale in many of your wealthiest counties—Middlesex, Surrey, Kent. By it Conservative Members were returned in London, Liverpool, Bristol, and Hull—the great commercial emporiums—and a tone thus given to the whole representation of the Empire. The hon. Member for Huntingdon and the hon. Mover of the Amendment are of course fitter exponents of the views of that mercantile body than I can pretend to be; but this I do think—a tolerably extensive acquaintance with the feelings of that class warrants me in saying—that their confidence in the right hon. Baronet is still unshaken. That confidence was placed in

him when they were yet scared at the democratic excesses which attended the passing of the Reform Bill; it united them to that great Conservative party which the right hon. Baronet created, in the belief that he would advocate a more tolerant policy in Church and State, than that which had proved the ruin of the old Tory party. That confidence grew stronger as the financial incapacity of the Melbourne Administration proved more and more apparent; and at the general election they supported the right hon. Baronet, not because they supposed him to be the opponent of free trade, but because they thought he would never have proposed a sweeping measure of financial change with a bankrupt Exchequer, and without a majority in either House of Parliament to support it. Sir, the commercial and mercantile body have at any rate not been disappointed in the right hon. Baronet; and I believe they will again rally round him in defence of national order and of national credit. If you do now desert him—if you hesitate to follow the enlarged and enlightened policy he has chalked out—in vain will you look to the mercantile class for aid. In vain will you call on the colonial interest to range itself with you in defence of the protection which they still receive. They will remember the marvellous facility with which you rescinded your vote on the Sugar Duties. They will remember your suicidal refusal, year after year, to put Australian corn on a footing with Canadian; and they will prefer to let their special claims for a gradual application of free-trade principles rest exclusively on the validity of the grounds they can adduce in their defence. Where then will your majority be? There are many among you who know all this—who believe the cause of protection to be desperate—but who fear that prompt concession will only lead to further and more democratic demands. They dread the power of the manufacturers: they urge that the League is but an incarnation of upstart democratic ambition—that it has ulterior objects—and, with a spirit worthy of a better cause, they are determined to resist this first inroad; and if they must fall, to fall, as the hon. Member for Cheshire expressed it, with honour. I regret that language should have been used by the hon. Member for Durham, and others both in and out of this House, calculated to give a colour to such fears. But I do not myself believe that any such spirit prevails among those who have upheld the League—dangerous as I think the permanent existence of such a body might become. I do not think such a spirit can exist in a country where the highest ranks and the greatest emoluments are open to all. If it did exist, it would be powerless; for I am sure it would in vain appeal to the lower orders against their natural protectors, the aristocracy, unless unhappily they should be set against them on a question of this exciting nature. But, Sir, if it be true that such a spirit is lurking in this movement; that we are on the eve, as some suppose, of a struggle between the aristocratic and democratic elements of our Constitution; let me ask you whether the chivalry of England can find no better cause to fall in, than an inglorious struggle for the perpetuation of a bread tax? If the contest is to come, let us join issue in defence of our Church; let us present an unflinching front in support of our Throne and our Peerage; but do not, with divided counsels and disunited ranks, rush into a contest with the people in an attempt to restrict the supply of their daily food, and the wages of their industry.

Mr. P. BENNET, Jun., said, he took that the first opportunity that presented itself, to offer a few brief observations to the notice of the House, and to advert to the astonishment and surprise caused in the whole country at the sudden change that had taken place in the opinions of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. Admitting the able manner in which the right hon. Gentleman had conducted the financial affairs of this country, he could not help always feeling a degree of distrust, because of the way in which the right hon. Baronet had deserted his principles likewise on a former occasion, in respect to a much more important object than that now under consideration, namely, the integrity of the Protestant religion. When he (Mr. Bennet) saw the right hon. Genlteman repudiating all he had done, and unsaying all he had said on that point, as well as on the subject of protection to agriculture, he could not contemplate the next step which the right hon. Baronet might take without fear and apprehension, because of the danger with which such desertion of principle menaced the country at large. It grieved him to the heart to say so, but such were his convictions. He entirely disagreed with the able speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Leominster, who had in great measure used the

arguments of the Member for Durham and the League—arguments which had been, in more able and more eloquent language, repeated to the House by the right hon. Baronet. Having heard the speech of the right hon. Baronet, and listened to it attentively, he could not forget those speeches eloquent in opposition to the principles the right hon. Baronet now contended for, and, forgetting, forego the opinions formed under his tuition. He (Mr. Bennet) represented an agricultural county; and seeing that their best interests were assailed by the course taken by the right hon. Baronet, he hoped the House would excuse him if he expressed himself too warmly upon the subject in debate. He had constantly resided in an agricultural district, and he had the best opportunities of perceiving the good feeling that subsisted between the three great classes into which the agricultural population was divisible—the labourer, the yeoman, and the landlord. The existence of this feeling to an extent which no one who had not lived among them for so long a period as he, could credit, he was prepared to bear witness to; and he could also aver, from his own knowledge, that no country gentleman with whom he was acquainted looked upon the question at issue as a matter of rent, but as a matter of kindly feeling for the yeoman, the tenant-farmer, and the labourer. Moreover, he was perfectly satisfied that their whole wish was to make the labourer as comfortable as he could be made by an increase of wages, and that they looked much less to their own interests in the question than to the advantages of their tenants. There had been a great competition latterly for labour, in consequence of the demand caused by railroad speculations, and the labourer consequently got more than he would for his labour under ordinary circumstances; but the labourer who was attached to his cottage and his residence would scarcely go into the depraved associations which he (Mr. Bennet) was sorry to say had been the concomitant of the railway system in this country. Having been returned lately for a part of the country where the excitement produced by the plan of the right hon. Baronet had not spread to any great extent, he believed that when that excitement was at its full height, a most striking result would be the consequence on a future appeal to the constitueneies. There had not been the least effort, however, on the part of the League, to prevent his return; nor had the adhesion of the Premier even to the League prevented the return of five protection Members to fill up so many county vacancies, without the League even venturing to interfere; which was significant as to the feeling of the agricultural districts. Being interested in the county of Cambridge, he was anxious to ask the Solicitor General, if he had been in his place, whether they were to have his assistance in maintaining protection? That hon. and learned Gentleman, in his speech at Cambridge on his election for the borough—his return for which was greatly owing to the country gentlemen of the neighbourhood—that hon. and learned Gentleman had stated that it was the greatest folly to attempt to introduce the principle of free trade into this country; and the hon. and learned Gentleman used upon that occasion the strongest language possible in favour of protection. He should not refer to the observations of the right hon. Baronet, who had pronounced himself wrong upon every former occasion, but he should content himself with expressing his most decided opposition to the measures of the Government.

Mr. MUNTZ said, the House was in rather an unfortunate state, and that he was the most fortunate man in it, except that he was not the most fashionable. He had no change to make in the opinion he had professed for the last thirty years. He had no speeches to retract, no principles to repudiate, and he had no cause of quarrel with the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. He differed with that right hon. Gentleman on the question before the House; he differed from the hon. Gentlemen who sat around him; and he differed from the hon. Gentlemen who sat on the other side of the House. But withal there was no man amongst them more anxious than he was for the passing of the measure by a triumphant majority. Its passing would be a national benefit, for it would tear away the veil of delusion which had obscured the common sense of the country for so long a period, and would remove for ever the perpetual excuse for political wrong—"the Corn Law did this, and the Corn Law did that, and the Corn Law did everything." He (Mr. Muntz) had repeatedly told the right hon. Baronet that he would ultimately have to reduce the price of everything to the continental level, or keep up prices and the wages of labour in this country nominally higher than at present. The right hon. Baronet had taken the former course on this occasion,

He thought it was the wrong course; but the right hon. Baronet having taken it, he thought it was his duty to support him, and enable him to carry out his views. [*Laughter.*] Hon. Gentlemen might laugh; he was long enough in that House to know that laughter decided no question submitted for discussion; but he thought they would not laugh when they heard his reasons, which were, that any state of things was better than the uncertainty of the last thirty years. Now, as to the question before the House. Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House had done well to change their cry from "protection to agriculture," to that of "protection to native industry." He contended that all native industry ought to be protected against the untaxed industry of other countries. [*Cheers.*] He heard those cheers, but he advised those who cheered not to crow until they were out of the wood. Had they, he begged to ask them, protected all native industry? He denied that they had—they had protected a portion, to a certain extent; but not all the native industry of the country. The hon. Member for Newcastle (Mr. Colquhoun), a few nights ago, had referred to him, and stated that for certain manufactures he was not now paying the labourers one-sixth of the wages he paid them some thirty years ago; and the hon. Member had done him (Mr. Muntz) the justice to say that he was the supporter of the rights and interests of the poor. In and out of Parliament he had ever been the same, and why? Because the poor were unable to defend or protect themselves. The remark made by the hon. Member (Mr. Colquhoun) was correct, for at the present moment he was paying for one description of manufacture just one-sixth of the wages he paid to his workmen in the year 1816. This, however, did not apply to all his labourers: to some he paid one-half—to others one quarter of their former wages, according to the nature of the work, and according also to the manufacture having to be brought by exportation into competition with foreign manufactures. The variations in the wages of labour depended exactly upon the contiguity of the competition with foreign manufactures. He repeated, that only a portion of the labour of this country had been protected by the Legislature. True, that protection had been given to the home labourers, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the wheelwright, the smith; but they had not given protection to the labourers who carried on such trades as the Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham trades, which came into competition with foreign manufacturers; and that was the reason why he objected to the Corn Laws, which were put forward as the means of protection to native industry. But he must add that he did not think the repeal of those laws would produce all the advantages which, in and out of the House, had been stated would be thereby achieved. The House had heard the speech of the right right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government—they had heard the speech of the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department—and they had also heard the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War (Mr. S. Herbert); but he submitted that those speeches contradicted each other as to the positive effects of the change which was contemplated. What would be the use of repeal if it did not produce a reduction of prices?—if it would not be productive of a reduction, he would not vote for it; it was because the repeal ought, must, and would, reduce prices, that he should vote for it. If wages of labour could not be protected, then let all classes row in the same boat—let them swim together for their lives, and, if they must sink, let them sink together. Both sides of the House had lent themselves to the right hon. Baronet in all his monetary measures, which had necessarily reduced the value of all property, produce and labour: they had, in fact, sowed the wind, and they now reaped the whirlwind. Though the right hon. Baronet now said, to justify his cause, that famine in Ireland stared him and the country in the face, and therefore that further progress in the removal of restrictions affecting the importation of food must be made, and advances in the direction of free trade must be kept up with other nations; still the real conviction of the right hon. Baronet was, that he must carry out the principles of a reduction of prices in support of his monetary system. When his commercial property had been reduced, and his men and their families reduced to ruin and beggary, did they feel for their miseries, or do anything to relieve them? No, the Members of Parliament had not hesitated to take care of themselves. He spoke of both sides. The Whigs had done the same. They sneered at commercial distresses, but now retribution was come both upon them and the right hon. Baronet. It was impossible for them to deny the fact which stared them in the face, that for thirty

years they had protected themselves at the expense of the people, and yet now they turned round and said, "We have been wrong all along—we are now going to become angels, for we are converted, convinced that, after all, honesty is the best policy." He (Mr. Muntz) had very little confidence in such sudden convictions, without any sufficient reasons being given. But he must say, that if any conduct was to be deprecated, it was that which knocked down the right hon. Baronet with one hand, and picked him up with the other. He himself could say hard things, for he was not mealy-mouthed, but he could not be fleecy on the one side, and dirty on the other. The right hon. Baronet had plainly said that he was convinced that, during the last three years, the rate of wages had nothing to do with the price of corn; and several Members, in support of his position, had quoted Adam Smith. Now he (Mr. Muntz) could not reject Adam Smith, because he had read him when a school-boy so often that he had committed him to memory; and if his memory had not been grievously injured by a recent fall, he remembered the writings of Adam Smith still. The right hon. Baronet had said that the rate of wages could not be affected by the price of corn, for that there had been three years of dear corn and low wages, and three years of cheap corn and high wages. He would quote a short extract from Adam Smith bearing upon that point; and he was the more anxious to do so because his constituents, a large and intelligent body, sometimes said he spoke sometimes on one side, and voted on the other. The extract was this :—

"Though the variations in the price of labour not only do not always correspond with those in the price of provisions, but are frequently quite opposite, we must not, upon this account, imagine that the price of provisions has no influence upon that of labour. The money price of labour is necessarily regulated by two circumstances—the demand for labour and the price of the necessaries and conveniences of life. The demand for labour, according as it happens to be increasing stationary, or declining, or to require an increasing, stationary, or declining population, determined the quantity of the necessaries and conveniences of life which must be given to the labourer; and the money price of labour is determined by what is requisite for purchasing this quantity. Though the money price of labour, therefore, is sometimes high where the price of provisions is low, it would be still higher, the demand continuing the same, if the price of provisions was high."

The thing to be considered by the House in reference to the question was, whether the other circumstances for the last six years had been the same as laid down by Adam Smith, and whether these circumstances altered the condition of the case. The right hon. Baronet claimed credit for the whole of the improvements, and attributed them entirely to his Tariff. There he (Mr. Muntz) differed altogether from the right hon. Gentleman, although he freely admitted that the reduction of duties had done some good. The peculiar circumstances which occurred in the years from 1841 to 1845 ought to be considered. Before 1841 no alteration in the Tariff occurred to relieve trade. The year 1841 was the year of the lowest prices and the year of the greatest pressure in trade, within the memory of man: like all previous similar times, much should be allowed for the reaction. After this year it must be recollected that the revenue was increased by 4,000,000*l.* or 5,000,000*l.* of Property Tax, while a great amount of taxation was taken off the working classes. The right hon. Baronet put his hand in their pockets for 5,000,000*l.* of Income Tax, and then said, "Look at my increase of revenue." Then there was the termination of the Chinese and Indian wars—the Chinese money—and the settlement of the boundary question—all of which acted with more or less force in producing a favourable state of things; and next, there was the circumstance of the augmented circulation of the Bank of England. In 1841 the amount was 16,000,000*l.*, in 1845 it was 22,000,000*l.* To these matters must be added the great advantage and effect of railway enterprise, which had had an immense effect upon prices and wages. He came from a central part of the kingdom, where the working of railways was deeply considered, and where a great part of the articles used in railways were manufactured; and he would undertake to say if railway speculation were checked or destroyed, labour and iron would be reduced 50 per cent. within six months. He knew from his own experience that railways had produced an enormous effect on the prices both of goods and of labour. It was, therefore, a bad argument on the part of the right hon. Baronet to attribute the prosperity which the country enjoyed during the last few years mainly to his measures, and to calculate and rely upon similar effects from the present proposed plans of proceeding. Now, there was one point more in the right hon. Baronet's speech to which he wished to direct the attention of the

right hon. Baronet and the House. The right hon. Baronet said the other night that the trade in no article on which the duty had been altered, had been injured since the alteration. There was one article connected with his own manufacture which would prove the contrary. He referred to zinc. In 1815 the price of zinc was 75*l.* per ton; but soon the duty was reduced, and it fell to 45*l.* per ton: in 1825 it was reduced again, and the price fell from 45*l.* to 15*l.*; and the present price per ton for zinc was 20*l.*, which afforded no profit in England. The effect of the last alteration in the duty had been to destroy every manufactory in this country but one, which was continued for some years, solely because the party was under contract to take a mine of coal at a very low rate, which must be paid for whether raised or not. Previously to the repeal of the duty, the whole of the zinc used in England was made in the country. He did not say this to show that they should not repeal the Corn Laws, because he wished to see them repealed; but he wished to show the right hon. Baronet how frail was the reed on which he leant. The article to which he had alluded could not now be made in this country, because the artisan here could not work at sixpence a day like the artisan of Silesia or Poland. In those countries they were obliged to burn wood, while we had coal in abundance; but the price of labour was so different that we could not manufacture it for less than 20*l.* per ton, while the foreigner could do it for 14*l.* This was one circumstance to show how easy it was to make declarations in the gross: he had not sought for this case, but there were many other things which were perhaps in the same predicament. There was another point. In 1815 the price of corn was 102*s.*, in 1845 it was 52*s.*; but the change in the currency made it about the same in real amount. The right hon. Baronet said that 10 per cent should be deducted from 102*s.* on account of the alteration in the value of the currency; but he (Mr. Muntz) said that 50 per cent should deducted, which brought the 102*s.* to 51*s.* They were therefore at issue upon this point, and probably should continue so; but the right hon. Baronet must excuse his now saying that his position was entirely altered. He had had the reputation of being infallible; but he could hold the reputation no longer, seeing that, according to his own confession, he had, for forty years, been wrong *in toto* upon a most important subject, the Corn Laws. He would ask the House whether it were not possible that within the next two or three years the right hon. Gentleman, having seen the effects of his own recent proceedings, and after having seen, as he would soon see, the effects of the now proposed laws —was it not possible, he would ask, that the right hon. Gentleman might again change his mind upon one other subject, and come down to the House, and declare that it was impossible for him to hesitate, after some two or three years' experience, as to the wisdom and expediency of a great and radical measure being adopted, to rectify the evils springing from a vicious monetary system? There was nothing unreasonable in expecting this step on the part of the right hon. Gentleman, who, at the same time, would not fail to claim credit for honesty in acknowledging his own convictions. He would ask whether there was any improbability of such a thing taking place, after what they had already witnessed? His object was to get all parties into his boat. He made no secret of the matter. The poor deserved protection as well as the rich; and if he could but get the rich and the poor into one boat, and when they were rowing for their fortunes, and perhaps for their lives, he would answer for their discovering a place of safety to land upon at last.

Mr. DISRAELI: I leave the right hon. Baronet the First Minister to settle the question of the currency with his new supporter, to whom we are indebted for a protection speech almost as effective as that delivered by the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool. The hon. Gentleman who has just addressed us seems to think that after the declaration of the Government all is doubtful; but there is at least one point on which no doubt can rest. Whatever may be the opinions of the two parties that now have entered into this great controversy on the main question before the House—however fervent may be our convictions of the advantages of protection—however sanguine may be the expectations of hon. Gentlemen opposite of the consequences of competition, there is one point on which we are all agreed, and with respect to which there can be no misunderstanding; and it is this—that Her Majesty's Ministers have changed their opinions. Whether the opinions they formerly pursued, or the opinions which they are now about to follow, are the right ones, the most expedient, and the

most calculated to benefit this country—this I apprehend to be the real question before the House. This is the question which, with the indulgence of the House, I shall endeavour to consider; and on which I will offer some suggestions, which I hope may induce hon. Gentlemen to hesitate before they accede to the great change which is proposed. I shall endeavour to show that the system of protection is not that odious system which it has been so long assumed to be. I pledge myself to meet the question on its merits; and though I may not be equal to the argument, I will not shrink from it. But before I presume to offer any considerations to the House in support of that system, it will be more convenient to notice the arguments offered by Her Majesty's Government in favour of the change proposed. We have been addressed in support of the measure of the Government by three Cabinet Ministers. It is due to the right hon. Gentleman the First Minister—due to his position, and to the comprehensive statement which he made of the case of the Ministers, that I should, perhaps, in the first instance, notice what that right hon. Gentleman said. He seemed to complain that the greater part of this discussion had been wasted by observations on the conduct of party. I have no wish myself to enter into that subject; nor should I have noticed it, had not the right hon. Gentleman, by the use which he made of the word "party," then, as well as on other occasions, seemed to entertain on that point ideas very different from those which animate and influence Gentlemen on these benches. We have, indeed, heard from these benches many comments on the conduct of party; but we associate with that word very different ideas from those which the right hon. Gentleman seems to entertain. We do not understand that party is anything but public opinion embodied. We protest against the doctrine of the right hon. Gentleman, that there is a distinction between political party and public opinion. We maintain that party is public opinion embodied, whether it represent the opinion of a majority or a minority; it, at all events, represents the opinion of a great section of the community. In this country, where the nation is divided into parties, and where great results are brought about by public discussion, and by the organization also, no doubt, of material interests—in this country, by these two agencies, reason and property, we arrive in times of change at the solution of controversies the most difficult. Such are the beneficial consequences of this system, that, however fierce the controversial strife—however violent the agitation of the nation—still you will always find that when a question is settled by the legitimate influence of what the right hon. Gentleman calls "party," but which is in fact national organization, the nation is content and satisfied with the decision; and you seldom see a question so settled reopened. We do not complain of the right hon. Baronet for having changed his opinion—opinion is not in the power of human will; but what we complain of is, not that he has deferred too much to public opinion, but that he has outraged public opinion—that he has prevented its legitimate action in the settlement of questions by the aid of party, or embodied public opinion—and that he has arrived at a conclusion, and probably will achieve a result, which will not be, on account of the mode in which it has been brought about, satisfactory to the community. We say, and say with reason, that by the aid of that great mass of public opinion which we represent, the right hon. Baronet was raised into power; and that a Parliament was elected to give effect to that opinion which we represent, and the right hon. Baronet has disregarded. If the noble Lord opposite, who represents another section of public opinion, had succeeded and been made Minister—if his side had succeeded in becoming the majority, and had settled these questions, we should then have yielded; because we should have felt that the solution of these questions had been brought about by constitutional means—by the legitimate operation of public opinion. But we feel that this question is not now settled, and cannot be settled, in a constitutional manner. It is not merely that we have the sad spectacle of the right hon. Baronet surrounded by a majority, who, while they give him their votes, protest in their speeches against his policy ["No, no!"]—is not that the fact? I thought there was no doubt about it; and that the illustrious converts that we have heard of, are converts to the policy and not to the principles of the right hon. Gentleman. There is not only the flagrant scandal of a Minister bringing forward under such circumstances a great measure, with, as he has announced himself, the majority of his Cabinet against him, but public opinion is not fairly dealt with; and when we complain of the right hon. Baronet not treating his party fairly, we do not speak of the 300 Gentle-

men on these benches, but we speak of the great body of the community whose views they represent, and of that public opinion which is the result of their convictions. I have now made the only observations I shall offer in answer to what has fallen, on this head, from the right hon. Baronet. The right hon. Baronet then proceeded to indicate what he considered the proper subject of discussion; and I confess that he, in his description of what should be the proper subject of discussion, at once described and indicated the fallacy of his own position, and the fatal policy he would have us pursue. The right hon. Gentleman said, "I call on you not to discuss the party question, but" —to do what?—"to meet an emergency, and to construct a system." Now, if there be any contrast more complete than another, it must be that between a system which should be permanent, and an emergency which, however managed, must to a certain degree, be temporary. This was, I think, at once, the blot of the position of the right hon. Baronet in his very first step. If we were considering the policy of the Minister of a foreign country, and if we brought to that consideration calmer spirits than now animate us, we should at once say that this was a great mistake. I say that it would be a great mistake in the noble Lord opposite, in dealing with a national emergency, were he to say, "I have measures to meet this emergency, but at the same time I ask you to reconstruct your commercial policy in accordance with the policy which I have always advocated, and for which, therefore, you are prepared." But what would you say to a Minister who, with an emergency, asks you to reconstruct your commercial system, and at the same time tells you that you must do this in total opposition to all he has before taught you as wise and politic? Now, Sir, as regards the emergency—namely, the state of Ireland—I must protest against any one in this House warning us not to speak of that country in a tone of levity. I am not conscious of ever having spoken of Ireland in a tone of levity, though I may speak in a tone of levity of a feeble policy with reference to Ireland. But before we touch upon this, there is one point which it would be well for some Member of the Cabinet to clear up. I believe there are no more free-trade Members of the Cabinet to speak; but perhaps we may be favoured with the opinion of a protection Member; for it is a remarkable characteristic of the present anomalous state of affairs, that we have at the same time a protection Cabinet and a free-trade Ministry. The right hon. Gentleman told us that he feels the difficulty under which he necessarily labours in himself proposing these changes in our commercial system; that he had wished these changes should be proposed by others; but at the same time time he informs us that he proposed these identical measures in Cabinet long before he meditated the rupture of that Cabinet, or perhaps anticipated the opposition he received in it. How, then, does he reconcile the two statements? How does he reconcile the fact that he did propose these measures to the Cabinet, which unexpected opposition to them ultimately broke up, with the statement, recently so often repeated, that he wished others had brought them forward? I proceed first to notice the emergency. I say, then, we are ready, as regards the emergency, to do all that any Minister entitled to the confidence of Parliament would recommend. We are prepared to do for Ireland—I do not say all that Ireland can desire, but all that human judgment can devise; but we don't exactly understand the position of the right hon. Gentleman with respect to this subject. It has been involved in great obscurity. The right hon. Gentleman says, "I was for opening the ports;" the statement was met by a cheer —a response of sympathy from these benches; and then, taking a rapid view of the economical history of the country, proving that the ports had often been opened, and beneficially opened, the right hon. Baronet turned round and said, "Yes, it is very well for you to cheer me; but although I was prepared to open the ports, I was not prepared to shut them again." Well, now, it seems from that, the difficulty of the right hon. Gentleman was not as to opening the ports; that, under the circumstances, he would have had no difficulty about. But the difficulty lay at the bottom of his policy: the right hon. Baronet had resolved that the present system of corn and provision laws should cease. Compare these facts with the declaration that has just been made by a Member of the Cabinet, not exactly on the hustings, but before a large body of his constituents in a midland county—the extraordinary declaration, which I dare say attracted the attention of many, made by the Chief Secretary for Ireland. He tells them, "We had wished that this communication should have been made to another Parliament;" that is to say, the present Parliament might have

gone on—there might have been a renewal, another seven years' lease, of the Conservative majority; and when the general election had taken place, and we had just met, we should have received the announcement which, by peculiar circumstances, has been made too soon. Now I am making no charge; I am throwing out hints to the protective Members of the Cabinet who probably may rise in the course of this debate. These are points on which we wish to have information. We want to know whether it was a foregone conclusion, and whether the Secretary for Ireland was authorized in saying that it was not intended to propose these changes until a new Parliament had assembled. We want to know whether it is a fact that, although the right hon. Gentleman has more than once said he deplores that the task has fallen on him, and wished it had fallen to others, the right hon. Gentleman, before the idea could have been conceived by any other human being, had proposed these measures in Council, and insisted on their adoption? These are two circumstances that require elucidation. When the right hon. Gentleman first brought these measures before the notice of the House, he seemed to found them on the observation of the last three years; but in the last speech he made, he found fault with that expression, and the position he then laid down was this:—"I don't say that it was the experience of the last three years that induced me to adopt the measures I now recommend; but, taking a general view of the commercial history of this country for a long period, I had seen, with gradual and sometimes considerable relaxations of protective duties, and especially during the last three years, under the influence of my Tariff, a great simultaneous increase of exports and imports." I believe that is a fair statement of what the right hon. Gentleman said. Now, it is very agreeable to hear of a great increase of exports and imports; and if the right hon. Gentleman had been only opening his annual Budget, I would not have been captious. But when a great social revolution is proposed and recommended to us, and that great change recommended on the data afforded by our exports and imports, it becomes the House to be very cautious in their conduct, and analyse very severely the conclusions from those data. Now, Sir, there is one cause, with which I dare say the House, and particularly hon. Members opposite, are very familiar, but which has never been mentioned in this debate, which operates extremely, and has especially operated upon the exports and imports of this year. I am throwing overboard all consideration of exuberant harvests and magnificent public works—all those features of nature and of art—which the right hon. Baronet never referred to on the first occasion. I am not taking advantage of these omissions; I believe it is universally acknowledged by all persons, whatever opinion they may have upon the great question, that the basis of the right hon. Gentleman's argument was much too limited at first, and the data on which he built it utterly fallacious. I throw out of consideration all these circumstances, and I put my finger upon an important agency in this question, to which I call the attention of the House; there is nothing that affects imports especially so much as the state of the seasons. Now, I will show you a case, as a commercial transaction, both as regards the imports and exports, which illustrates the agency of this principle. If you look at the exports and imports this year, you will find a very great increase in both in the instance of sugar. It is impossible to suppose that the Tariff, the alteration in the sugar duties by the right hon. Gentleman, could have influenced to any extent the consignments of sugar that we received, particularly from the more distant ports, from the Mauritius, for instance, and from the East Indies; but there happened to be an abundant crop both in the Mauritius and in the East Indies, and owing to that circumstance our imports of sugar from those parts of the world were much greater than usual, and will no doubt figure in the table to be brought forward by the right hon. Baronet on some future day, in vindication of his commercial policy. Now, it is a curious circumstance that while there has been that abundant crop in the Mauritius and the East Indies, there has been a total deficiency of the crop at the Havannah. Trace, then, the influence of the seasons upon trade. All the great Russian refineries are entirely supplied by the Havannah; and what occurs? Why, Russia imported sugar from England; and thus you see, at the same time, the influence of a good season immensely increases the import of sugar from the Mauritius and India into this country; and the influence of a bad season in the Havannah produces a great increase in the export of sugar from England to Russia. No one will pretend that that is the consequence of the Tariff. I say it was the influence of the seasons;

and the same influence may probably be traced in the exports and imports of all the great raw commodities which mainly make up our colonial transactions. I know this subject is dry and unpalatable to the House; but I feel myself bound to enter into it. I want to show the influence of the seasons upon exports and imports. Suppose, for example, you had had a very bad cotton crop in the United States, a crop as deficient as one I remember, to the extent of half a million of bales; do you mean to say that putting an end to the paltry duty you levied upon cotton wool, would have led to the great increase in the import this year? An exuberant crop has produced an immense import. If you will look into the wool trade, you will find a great increase from the same cause; and whether it be coffee, or sugar, or wool, or cotton—those four great staple articles—the influence of the seasons on their import must never be overlooked. Now, at the risk of wearying the House, I must venture to notice another statement of the right hon. Gentleman, one of those that he sometimes makes with his figures all ready, and with that felicitous manner that seems to augur a favourable result. The right hon. Gentleman has made a battlehorse of the unfortunate silk trade. I really should have thought that the memory of the handloom weavers might have prevented a Minister, although the most ardent votary of free trade, from putting forward the case of the silk trade. My hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire has referred to that trade; and, without now alluding to details with which the House is familiar—throwing out of the calculation all that animal refuse which compared with real silk is in value as 2*d.* to 10*d.* is to 14*s.* to 25*s.* per pound—I beg the right hon. Gentleman to contrast the import of raw silk in 1844, with the import of what may be fairly considered the last year of a protected trade. In the last year of protected trade, if my memory serves me right, we imported 4,100,064 lb. of raw silk; that is exactly twenty-two years ago; and in 1844, after twenty years of the blessings of this relaxed protection, we imported 4,020,063 lb.; and yet it appeared from the statement of the right hon. Baronet, unless he is misreported, that the contrast he drew was between 3,000,000 lb. under protection, and an import of 6,000,000 lb. under a relaxed system. But suppose the increase had been such as the right hon. Gentleman stated, I cannot believe for a moment that you are to ascribe all the progress in a country like England, with the untiring energies of the English nation, to the principle that may regulate your commercial code. I know, that if the country is prosperous, we are ready to allege the advantage of protection; while hon. Gentlemen opposite are equally prompt to urge that the approximation we have made to liberal commerce has benefited the country. I believe, whether we had one system or the other, the country would to a certain degree flourish; though there may be much class suffering and much individual misery—the two things we wish to prevent. But the extraordinary circumstance connected with the silk trade is, that it has not thriven. It is the exception that is to prove the rule. If hon. Gentlemen doubt my statement, they will have ample opportunities to contradict me. The fact is not very material to my argument, however, and I will give you a good reason why. I made these observations, because I thought them deserving of the attention of the House, and especially the effect of the seasons upon imports; but I am perfectly willing to admit the principle which the right hon. Baronet has established in his last speech. Now, what is that principle? The right hon. Baronet says, that we have been removing prohibition and relaxing protection for thirty years, and the country has been more flourishing than ever. Now that is my case. I say the country is flourishing because you have given to its trade a just, a judicious, and a moderate protection. But the right hon. Gentleman having proved, especially in his last exposition of the policy of Government, that by a just, judicious, and moderate protection, England has flourished, turns round very calmly to us, and says, "I am bound to acknowledge that I have changed my opinion upon this subject of protection; I am no longer in favour of it." His whole speech, after all, only proved the advantage of protection. It can prove nothing else but the advantage of the principle of a moderate protection. ["Oh!"] I am sorry, Sir, to have excited that groan from a free trader in distress. I want to ask the right hon. Gentleman a very important question—does he believe that he can fight hostile tariffs with free imports? That is the point. ["Hear!"] "Hear, hear," from the disciples of the school of Manchester! A most consistent cheer! They have always maintained they can; and if their principles are right, as they believe they are—

as I believe they are not—I can easily understand, that their premises being assumed, they may arrive at that conclusion. They believe they can fight hostile tariffs with free imports, and they tell us very justly, "Let us take care of our imports, and every thing else will take care of itself." But is that the conviction of the right hon. Gentleman? We want to know that; because, if that be his conviction, why all these elegies over defunct diplomatic negotiations to procure commercial treaties? Why does the right hon. Gentleman speak with so much pity and with so much pique upon the question of his diplomatic intercourse on the subject of relaxed commerce? If he believe that we can meet hostile tariffs with free imports, he need not trouble himself about commercial treaties. But if the right hon. Gentleman does not believe that—if he has not the conviction of the school of Manchester—then he is not justified in offering this measure. But how can I believe that the right hon. Gentleman has this conviction, which he has never enunciated, when he tells you, as one of the recommendations of this measure, that he hopes great things from a good example? If he believes in that great principle to which I have just alluded, a good example is of no importance whatever. We must have a protection Minister speak upon this subject. We must have a clear declaration from the Cabinet upon this important point; it is the question upon which all hinges. I conclude from the language of the right hon. Gentleman that he is not quite satisfied on this head; how otherwise am I to explain his language? He tells you that Prussia already shakes; he reads to you the report of an American Minister in favour of what is really free trade — an equal interchange of the peculiar products of different countries; he makes what I must consider very extraordinary statements of opinions upon the subject in France, and to which my noble Friend the Member for Newark has very properly referred. I cannot presume to offer an opinion upon these high subjects of Cabinet secrets, after such declarations from the right hon. Gentleman. It may be because all things are possible—that the Americans are going to change their tariff —that Prussia already shakes—that the French are votaries of free trade; but I think it my duty, with permission of the House, to offer them some facts, from which I leave them to draw their own conclusion. In the first place, we have been referred to the report of Mr. Walker, the Secretary of the American Treasury. Mr. Walker is a very respectable man; I believe—I am so informed on authority — that Mr. Walker is not interested in the protection of native industry; and I am sorry to say that in America, for the last few years, the question what your material interest is, is almost the only line of demarcation between parties. But before you calculate upon any modification in the tariff of America, it is just as well that the House should clearly understand what is the power of the manufacturing interest—the protected interest—in America. I will not refer to that enormous volume which has already been the subject of criticism; but an American gentleman residing at Liverpool has sent me the last census of the American population. It was taken in 1840, and I believe it is the last; if there be a later one, it would be rather more in my favour. Now, what do you suppose is the number of manufacturing operatives in the United States? In 1840, and since 1840, under this tariff, there has been the greatest development of manufacturing industry yet known in America. In 1840, the number of the manufacturing operatives in the United States was 800,000—a population exceeding, I believe, the manufacturing population of our four great staple manufactures in England. The hon. gentleman, who is the Secretary of the Treasury there, says in his report that the only interests concerned are the interests of 10,000 manufacturers. Now, the importance of an interest is to be calculated from the amount of the population employed and of the capital invested. The number of the manufacturers may be of very secondary importance; but there are 10,000 manufacturers in the United States, and I want to know how many there are in England? I know, if you look to the Population Returns, which were drawn up by a pen not favourable to the agricultural interest, the number of manufacturers does not appear; probably it was not convenient to mention it; but I very much doubt whether there are 10,000. At any rate, see the importance of the interest you have to encounter. But that is not all. I need not dilate on the number of individuals in America, who are dependent upon these 800,000 operatives. But there is no agricultural State in the vicinity of these manufacturing establishments that is not in favour of protection; and for this reason—because protection gives them the benefit of a home market. Now, you

have to encounter the best organized, and, probably, the most numerous interests in the United States; and unless you are aware of the special circumstances in respect to the industry of the United States, it is impossible to comprehend what is going on in that country. I will give an illustration of this. The other day I met a noble Lord who was once a Minister of the Crown, and a most distinguished man. He was in great trouble about the Oregon question, and said, with an expression of surprise—"Here is the venerable Adams, who was always the advocate of peace, who has made a furious war speech!" The noble Lord was astonished at this; but he was not aware that in proportion as free trade has become popular in England, has the manufacturing or protected interest in the United States become warlike. They have discovered that war — and I am quoting the argument of a most respectable literary organ of the party, which I only read last night—that, after all, war will be the only protection for the manufacturer. Now, let me pray the House to remember the arguments which have been employed in favour of reducing the Tariff for the American markets. It has always been considered a principal peacemaker — the proper way to remove the small cloud on the other side of the Atlantic. But remember that in exact proportion as you conciliate the Western settlements, you will lose the affections of the great Northern States, who are the most powerful part of the American community. I put this to the consideration of the noble Lord who has recently visited that country, and who so much interested us the other night with an account of it—I mean the noble Lord the Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire—who, I must say, I rejoice to see returned to us, even though it be as the Member for the West Riding. I listened to his speech with great interest: his descriptions of American landscape were admirable; all I wished was, that he would have entered a little more into certain social details, have given us, for instance, an authentic revision of that celebrated transatlantic melody which describes how statesmen may jump from one set of opinions to another. I have endeavoured to condense my observations on this subject; but I think they are worthy of calm consideration. I cannot say a word when I am told—oracularly told, that Prussia already shakes. I can only say that I read a book, just published, within this month, where there is no indication of this wonderful shaking. It is written by a man who, on the contrary, testifies to the most obstinate determination on the part of Prussia that this free-trade system must be uncompromisingly resisted. With respect to the Manchester people, he says that they can export at a loss; and he quotes the pamphlet of Mr. Baines, and a speech of the hon. Member for Durham, to that effect. He says they can go on exporting at a loss, and thus they will swamp our markets, so that these dangerous measures of the English Government render it necessary, we should make our Tariff, if possible, more stringent. We require a more detailed account of the shaking of Prussia; and till we receive it I, for one, shall be extremely sceptical. I have indeed read a most mournful representation from the little State of Mecklenburgh; they say they have been asked to join the Zollverein over and over again; but they have not joined it in consequence of the remonstrances of the English Minister, to their great injury; and they say—"After all the sacrifices we have made, if the Zollverein have free importation to England, we have no advantage whatever, and the best thing we can now do is to join the Zollverein, and see what measures can be best devised to advance the cause of native industry." Now, I come to France: and I admit that I never in my life listened to anything with more astonishment than to the prospects which the right hon. Gentleman held out as to France. Remember these are prospects held out by the Minister, not by Gentlemen of the Manchester school, who believe that they may fight hostile tariffs with free imports. He holds out these prospects; but I say without hesitation what is my conviction—and I speak with some knowledge of the public men of France---that, with the exception of an occasional statesman who attempts to humour and conciliate an English Minister, I do not believe there is a leading individual in France who is not in favour of a high restrictive policy. It is a most curious circumstance which the House should bear in mind—and my hon. Friend the Member for Newark has properly alluded to it—that although there is no country in the world where parties are so violent as in France—not looking merely to changes of Government, but pointing to changes that make an Englishman recoil—yet you find this curious circumstance, that not only what is called the Conservative party, that which

sways the Chambers—the commercial feudality—and of course interested in all the great protected interests—but the republican party, the great object of whose struggles is not merely to get rid of a Sovereign or a Minister, but entirely to change the tenure of property—that party is opposed to what you call free trade as much as the commercial community. You have in France these two great interests, the politico-philosophical and the commercial, all working together against what they call the fatal principle of competition. There was but one way of ever gaining any relaxation of the mercantile system of France, and that was by diplomacy. The French Cabinet will do nothing without a treaty. An opportunity for some partial interchange once offered itself, which might have benefited the cutlery of Sheffield: but that is all past. You now propose to open your ports without condition, and France has no longer an object to negotiate for. I bring it, then, to this point, that if the right hon. Baronet is not prepared to meet hostile tariffs with free imports, he has no ground to stand upon. And now let us try fighting hostile tariffs with free imports. I will suppose that we have a great increase of importation from the shores of the Baltic; that, in addition to the commerce we have already with those countries, we import a great deal more. Supposing you import 5,000,000*l.* more from Russia than you ever did before, how will you make your payments if they take no more additional goods from you than they do now? Will you pay in gold? Can you? I know hon. Gentlemen opposite will reply, they manage these things by means of bills, and so on; but that will not improve the case. Suppose, when you have got the 5,000,000*l.* additional from Russia, you buy Russian bills on Brazil or New York to the amount of those 5,000,000*l.*, and you thus complete your transaction. But you have already supplied the Brazilians and Americans with as much of your goods as they care to take, and if you want to sell still more to them, you must do so at a great sacrifice. Supposing, for instance, you send out to one of these countries 1,500,000*l.* of goods, and they only require 1,000,000*l.*, then it is clear you must sell the other 500,000*l.* at an immense sacrifice. Prices fall, profits are reduced, wages are lowered. But the system of the Government, it appears, is a comprehensive system; this process is going on at the same time in several other markets. Are you prepared to meet the effect it will have on the general distribution of the precious metals? Every year, and in every market, English labour will receive less in return of foreign articles. But gold and silver are foreign articles; and in every year, and in every market, English labour will have less command of gold and silver. If the precious metals become more valuable, prices must fall. But let me ask how you are to meet your taxation—how are you to meet the fixed burdens of the country, if you bring on a general fall of prices in England? I confess I see little chance of assistance in the new Banking Bill of the right hon. Baronet. That is a measure rather characterized by caution than security. Now, unless the right hon. Baronet is prepared to fight hostile tariffs with free imports, I repeat that he is not justified in bringing forward this measure. And now, Sir, before addressing myself to the principle of protection, I feel myself bound in courtesy to notice the speeches of two right hon. Gentlemen who addressed the House during the debate. The first is the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War; and I must say, the spirit of that speech surprised me; and it was—I do not use the term offensively—a League speech—a speech, which if made at the right time, and by the proper person, and under proper circumstances, might have been received with much applause. I can easily understand how some hon. Members, who are sitting opposite to me at this moment, who entered political life with a deep conviction of the truth of a great economical principle—who have traced, though in an exaggerated spirit, the many evils which, according to their view, have flowed from the system to which they are opposed; I can conceive how, acting under a profound and passionate conviction of these, which I believe animates many Gentlemen of the Anti-Corn-Law League—I can easily conceive them using such language. But I must say that the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War was not the person to address this House as a martyr, when he is only a convert. I was going to say a recent convert—forgetting that he has informed us that in 1841 he was in favour of the principles of free trade: he only objected then to the mode in which the principles were applied; the mode in which they were then applied was from the opposite side of the Table. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of War congratulated the House upon the fact that the

fallacy of cheap bread was discarded by all parties; while the Secretary of State, in his address on the following night, in answer to an appeal from my noble Friend the Member for Stamford, stated, that unless the question before the House involved a cheaper and more abundant supply of food to the people, there was no question before them. How does the Secretary of State for the Home Department reconcile that with the speech of the Secretary at War? I am not surprised that there should be such distraction in their counsels, when there is such discordance in their speeches. The Secretary at War also, as respects a most important interest in this comprehensive scheme, which I do not wish now more particularly to advert to, except to say that it is, in my opinion, the most important interest—the right hon. Gentleman asks, what do you fear from free imports? Where are they to come from? Now, I want to avoid making a Corn Law speech—I shall have other opportunities of doing so; but at the same time, when an observation of this kind is made, I cannot allow it to pass unnoticed, for I observe that there is a coolness of assertion very prevalent on this subject. I read a speech to-day, from one whom we all respect, and who, I believe, we may now call a noble Parliamentary victim. Addressing the electors, he said—"What need you care about imports? Suppose there is an importation of 1,000,000 quarters, there will be a rise of 10*s.* in the price." Now, I beg to say that I have investigated the subject as much as I could, and that I have some personal experience of the corn-growing countries; and I have not the slightest doubt that when this system shall be established, you will get any quantity of corn from those countries that you like. It is ridiculous to tell us that they have no capital. The gentlemen of Manchester will soon lend them some. It is idle to say they have no roads. The Member for Sunderland will soon make them some. I will say, also, that there is no fallacy so great as to suppose that prices will rise as soon as there is an established market here, in proportion to the demand. This may be true is cases of an uncertain demand; but the moment you have a settled market, in exact proportion to the demand prices will fall. ["No, no!"] This is the inevitable rule. ["No, no!"] I am prepared to support my assertion with facts, if the House will allow me. Take the article of tea for example. The demand for tea has increased year after year, and year after year prices have fallen. Take the article of cotton as another example; for there is a great analogy between cotton and corn. I remember when there was the same discussion in America respecting the supply of cotton, as we have now respecting corn; and it was maintained in a pamphlet by a member of Congress, that, under no circumstances, could the price of cotton be less than twelve cents per pound. Well now, the fact has turned out that ever since a regular trade in cotton was established, with scarcely an interval the price of cotton has diminished, and diminished, and diminished, till it has fallen sometimes as low as three cents per pound. You may reject my reasoning as regards corn; but until you refute my examples respecting tea and cotton, you have no right to do so. Well, now, to return to the speech of the right hon. the Secretary at War: he asks us, what is the use of all this agitation about a mere question of the repeal of a duty on one article of import? The right hon. Gentleman forgets that last year the abolition of this article of import was a "social revolution." And then follows the consistent Secretary of State, and he tells us, that if we refuse to pass this measure, we shall bring upon England anarchy, misery, and ruin. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State was, it appears, very much alarmed at the end of last year in consequence of a deficiency of potatoes in Ireland. He told us so; he told us that he was also alarmed in consequence of an expected deficiency in the wheat harvest of England; and he also told us that he was particularly alarmed because it might possibly bring about a state of affairs such as we had in 1842, by which he assured us he was much more alarmed than was imagined at the time. Now I have observed that ever since the right hon. Baronet has been a Minister of a Conservative Cabinet, he has annually brought forward a very extensive measure, which has as regularly produced great alarm and excited great odium in the country; and that the right hon. Gentleman, alarmed at his own proceedings, has ended by withdrawing the measure. Bold in opposition—not too scrupulous—it seems a characteristic of the right hon. Gentleman, that the responsibilities of office should bring to him not prudence but panic. And these are the Ministers who turn round and say, "You are alarmed at our measure, but you will not suffer at all except from your own

panic." Why, they are the children of panic; they are an alarmist Cabinet. I know not from what cause, but fright is stamped on their every forehead—whether it arises from a deficiency of food in Ireland, or a superabundance of suffrages in Lancashire. And now if the House will permit me, I will meet the question of protection. I have not deviated from my engagement. I was bound to answer the main arguments that were offered by the Government in favour of their new system; and now I would offer a few remarks in favour of that which they would abrogate. Sir, the noble Lord the Member for London, in his address the other night, the tone of which I am sure every one felt was alike equal to the occasion and to himself, touched on the question of protection in the abstract. He expressed in classic language the usual economical theories on the subject — very valuable, no doubt, in themselves, and very accurate, but theories which never influenced human conduct, and which are incapable of ever doing so. Therefore all we could admire in the address of the noble Lord was the evidence it afforded of his well-read mind. Now, Sir, I don't know what the noble Lord means, dealing as we are with England, and with practically existing circumstances, I don't know what he means by the protective system of this country. I don't find that in England the protective system has ever been what he described it to be—protective to every branch of native industry. I don't find that such a system as that ever existed. There was, Sir, once in England a commercial system, founded on principle, definite in its details, and, in a certain sense, beneficial in practice—I mean the colonial system. No doubt it involved some degree of protection to native industry, but it was always auxiliary to the colonial system. I am not, I assure the House, referring to these points as matters of historical curiosity, but in order to see whether it is not possible that we might come to some agreement as to what the principle of protection is. Now we always had in England in those good old days of which a noble Friend of mine has spoken, a very liberal system of commerce with the Continent. There were propositions made at Utrecht, which were not carried into effect for a general system of commercial communication at a very moderate duty — at 10 per cent. That was really the principle of free trade. In the middle of the eighteenth century our foreign trade was sacrificed to the upholding of our colonial system. There is no doubt whatever, that the range of our transactions in commerce was thereby curtailed; but the merchants of England were compensated by more secure markets and larger profits. But at length your colonial system deserted you. You lost your principal Colonies, and then you had to lay down a new principle. It fell to the lot of Mr. Pitt to do that. His speeches, at the end of the eighteenth century, which you all have read, are a development of the real principles of free trade — a large system of commercial intercourse on the principle of reciprocal advantage. He told the Members of this House, "You must no longer adhere to those old ideas derived from the colonial system, for we have no longer a colonial world to support that system. You must come forward — (he was speaking to the manufacturers especially; for the country Gentlemen, on commercial subjects, were far more docile and enlightened) — and give up your colonial system. What did Mr. Pitt do? He brought forward a new Tariff, as the right hon. Gentleman did. He came down to this House and said, "Here is my new Tariff; these are the terms of interchange with Europe. They are liberal terms. I want to have a free intercourse; and I have entered into commercial treaties with various Powers, and I have begun with France." Then came your revolutionary war, which upset all this system. But the moment it was over you returned again to the principles then laid down. Mr. Huskisson and Lord Liverpool pursued the same system further, and at last we again find it recurred to by the right hon. Baronet. For myself, I gave a conscientious vote for the Tariff of the right hon. Baronet, as embodying a system of moderate, just, and judicious protection, and which was in complete harmony with what I think are the true commercial principles of this country. We know what a contrary policy would have effected. We are not without examples. We know what a system of absolute prohibition will accomplish; for we have the example of Spain always before us; and we know, also, there is another country where there has been a complete application, for a long term, of the system of unmitigated competition—not, indeed, from any philosophical conviction of its policy, but rather from the haughty indifference with which a race of conquerors are too apt to consider commerce. There has been

free trade in Turkey for a long time, and what has it produced? It has destroyed some of the finest manufactures in the world. As late as 1812 these manufactures had existed; but they have been destroyed. Now, that was the consequence of competition in Turkey, and its effects have been as pernicious as the effect of the contrary principle in Spain. You have had the same impossibility of aggregating capital---the same impoverishment of the people. And one of the great causes of the financial difficulties of the Porte has been, that there the effects of unbridled competition have been as pernicious as those of excessive protection in Spain. When a great Minister has to deal with the general arrangements of the commercial affairs of a country, he has two main objects to attain—first, how to employ the people; and, secondly, to secure them variety of employment, which, in case of the failure of any particular branch, may prevent their being left without resource. I think the right hon. Baronet said that there was a very great difficulty in arguing against the principles of free trade, because they had a *primâ facie* case in their favour. Sir, I never care much about *primâ facie* cases. It would be just as easy for me to say that there was a *primâ facie* case for protection, as for the right hon. Baronet to say that there was one in favour of free trade. To protect the industry of our fellow subjects is certainly, *primâ facie*, desirable. Well, now, the right hon. Baronet has announced, officially announced, that the principle of protection is for ever relinquished by his Cabinet. We think that principle a beneficial one. Mind, I don't say I am now proving it to be so. We might call on him to prove the contrary. That *onus probandi* lies on him. Nevertheless, on that ground, I will now meet the Gentlemen of the Anti-Corn-Law League. I heard the able speech of the hon. Member for Manchester; I unfortunately lost the speech of the hon. Member for Durham; but I have been careful to make myself acquainted with it, as, indeed, I was bound to do. I have considered those two speeches; and I must say I cannot extract from either of them a single principle which can guide me in this maze, or a single reasonable objection to the principle of protection. I admit, however, that as those hon. Gentlemen have made so many other speeches, it is not fair in me thus to single out an isolated one. Now, I declare that I wish to meet their case in the fairest manner possible. I confess I have great difficulty in doing so, because I find that the arguments of the League have perpetually changed. It is a curious fact, that although they have been working now for seven years, they commenced by promising cheap bread to the labourer, and have ended by promising high rents to the landlord. I am not stating this as a charge against the League. I can understand that if I were engaged in working out a great principle, and placed it in every possible light, I might constantly see contrary effects produced; and I willingly believe that the League all this time, when we thought they were instructing the people, have been only educating themselves. And I will tell the Gentlemen of the League another reason why I am able to trace this ingenuous development of their mind. I have in my possession a printed circular, a sort of manifesto, of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester, issued in 1839, which gives a most melancholy account of the commercial condition of England at that time. I examined that document, and I found that the panacea proposed for all these evils was a change, not in the Corn Laws, but in the currency. But you say what is the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester to the Anti-Corn-Law League? Now it so happens that the gentlemen who drew up that circular are the principal members of the League. If you doubt it, look up-stairs, and you will see in a book which contains the evidence before your Committee on Joint-Stock Banks in 1840 or 1841—I forget the year — that of some of the most distinguished members of the League—some of them holding seats in this House —and you will find that they then had not an idea about repeal of the Corn Laws, but that they were the sworn friends of the Member for Birmingham. [Mr. Muntz: No, no!] Do you mean to say that Mr. Richard Cobden, now the Member for Stockport, did not give evidence before that Committee? That he did not then trace all the evils of the country to the currency? [Mr. Muntz: I do not mean to say that he never did, but I never did.] I always thought that the hon. Member was one of the school of Gemini. It seems, then, that the League have been well considering all the great questions. Having exhausted the currency, they then turned round on the landlords. Continue the agitation, and perhaps the next person they will attack will be the fundholder. Perhaps we are only a link in the chain;

it will want a new victim; I think, therefore, we should promote the agitation, because, if we promote the agitation, it may attack a new interest. But now I am going to state the case of the League against the Protectionists; and I take it from the speeches delivered by Members of that body. They say, "Protection aims at two objects—to feed the people, and to employ the people. It has failed. It does not feed the people, because you are obliged to import corn. It does not employ the people, because you are obliged to send them to the towns, that they may earn their bread. Therefore, protection is a failure." Now, we say we can feed the people and employ the people. You may doubt our success; but though protection has failed, you must at least admit that free trade is untried. There are ancillary arguments; but can you deny that such is your main argument? No. Well, silence is consent. Now, in the first place, have we failed in feeding the people? We have no agricultural statistics, which I deplore; but we have what are called some great facts to guide us. We know that fifty years ago the population of this country was not half of what it is at present. We know that at that time we could not feed our people; that we imported as much as one-fifth part of the corn consumed. We know that now, in average years, we succeed in feeding the people, though their numbers are double what they they then were; and that we now supply them with food at a cheaper rate that we did then. That is a *primâ facie* case in our favour. It is said protection is the bane of agriculture. I don't see how protection can be the bane of agriculture, unless you mean to assert that the agriculture of England is inferior to that of any other country. Now, I want to know where are superior systems of agriculture to be found? You will not tell me that there is a superior system of agriculture in Russia. The agriculture of that country has been described by a graceful and graphic pen; and the passage must be so fresh in the recollection of the House that I need not repeat it. I believe the agriculture of Russia remains much in the same state as it was at the time of that description. Will you say that the agriculture of Germany is superior? I admit you may go over the world and take a small district, it may be in Flanders, or Tuscany, or Styria, in the south of Germany, where a system of agriculture may be pursued superior to the general cultivation of this country. I believe, however, that we have districts in Lincolnshire, in the Lothians, equal to any of these favoured spots. But what I want to know is, is there any breadth of land in the world capable of sustaining the population of a first-rate State, with an agriculture which can compare with that of Great Britain? You won't take me to the north of Germany. Take a rural town there with its one shop, perhaps that of an apothecary, who sells not only drugs, but everything else. Compare that rural town in the north of Germany with the rural towns of England—the smallest rural towns of England, with their many great shops, their six or seven large establishments abounding in Manchester goods. There you understand what is a home market. I will take a country very near this, the country of our rival and our friend—I will take France. That is a country blessed with great natural advantages—an exuberant soil, a fertile climate. It labours under none of the disadvantages which the Gentlemen of the League are perpetually reminding us agriculture is exposed to in this country. There is no primogeniture, no hereditary peerage, no law of entail, and no game. I ask is the agriculture of France to be compared with that of England? It seems then, that under the system of protection, the agriculture of England is not so very bad. Though the population has doubled within 50 years, it has contrived to feed the people at a lower rate. But you say there is no application of capital to the land in this country. I deplore the want of agricultural statistics. We must make researches, and from a number of facts deduce our inference. It is quite impossible to travel over England without being convinced that there is a greater application of capital to land in this country than in any other. It is quite impossible that the fact should be otherwise. There is not an Englishman working in any of our Colonies—there is not a resident at the court of an Indian prince—the great object of whose ambition is not to return to England, purchase land, and become a justice of the peace, or deputy lieutenant. Riding on elephants, surrounded by slaves, he is always dreaming of quarter-sessions. The land of England is not only supported by the capitalist of England, but it is the land of that country which is the metropolis of the world. It receives the tribute of the world. You say there is a deficient application of capital to the land of England. Why, inquiries have been made, and

statements, duly authenticated, are on record, which show that the imports of guano during the last two years amount, in value, to a million sterling, or a million and a quarter. No doubt, if you secured a mercantile profit, you might have a more organized application of capital to land. But the peculiarity is, that here, where wealth has so many channels of employment, land gives no more than a return of 3 per cent. I have often been asked by foreigners what is the reason why, when so many means are open for the employment of capital, people in this country should be so ready to invest their capital in land. It is what no foreigner can understand. It is your territorial Constitution that has invested the possession of land with an honour peculiar to itself, and, giving to the landowner a position which is superior to that of any other class, will always secure the investment of capital in the soil of England. Now, let me assume two events, both of which I fear are probable: I will assume in the first place that the present Corn Laws will be repealed; and in the second, that after the lapse of a few years we may be involved in a European war. What will be our intention? The past may guide us. I want hon. Gentlemen to consider the position of England at the time of the rupture of the Treaty of Amiens. At the time of the rupture of the Treaty of Amiens we had a virtual free trade in corn; we had long been in the habit of receiving a large portion of our supply from the Continent, when that great war commenced which concluded with Waterloo. What was the consequence? You tell me now, what does it signify whether we are independent or not of a foreign supply—we obtained a supply even from France in time of war. I believe in 1812 we did receive some corn from Holland and France. But if you base your theory upon that isolated fact, you not only fall into error, but misapprehend the real circumstances. I affirm that you were long prevented by that war from having supplies from the Continent; and it was only by gradually obtaining the dominion of the seas that you were able to secure any. But was that all? From the absolute want of corn, England at the time offered the greatest possible inducement to investments in land. You had then all those thousands of Enclosure Acts of which we have so often heard. You had an enormous rise of prices; wheat was 110*s.* the quarter; you raised loans at 110*s.* per quarter, and you had to pay the interest on those loans when wheat was at 55*s.* per quarter. Such were the unnatural excitement and subsequent depression which arose from your having neglected to secure a sufficient, or nearly sufficient, home supply of corn. Now, I want to know, remembering all these circumstances—remembering the state of England with respect to our means of subsistence, at the rupture of the Treaty of Amiens—remembering, at the commencement of that terrific struggle, that this country did receive a great portion of its supply from abroad—remembering that the importation of grain from foreign countries during that struggle was never secured till we had gained the dominion of the seas—a dominion which it would rather be a proof of our patriotic spirit than our political sagacity again to count upon—remembering that in this interval there were two occasions when absolute famine was impending over England, the quartern loaf in 1812 selling at 1*s.* 11*d.*—remembering all these circumstances, which ought to warn us against being dependent on foreign supply, and seeing that still, with all our immense increase of population, England has succeeded in mainly supporting herself: remembering all this, I want to know whether it would be politic again to incur such risks, and whether it can with truth be maintained that protection is the bane of agriculture, and has failed in its first office of sustaining the population of the country? And now I will meet the Gentlemen of the League on the second point of their allegation. They say this system has failed to employ the population. The right hon Gentleman the Secretary at War has touched upon this delicate subject. He said, only cultivate the hills of Wiltshire, and there will be sufficient employment for the whole population of that country. I ask the right hon. Gentleman why the hills of Wiltshire are not cultivated? It is a legitimate question to ask of one whose proud boast it is that he is the Representative of that county; still more it is a legitimate question to ask of one descended from an illustrious family that has been long planted in its soil; on him and his, among others, rests the responsibility of the want of cultivation in that county. You talk to me of Goatacre and Bremhill; you tell me of the miserable condition of the peasantry: it is not here alone that I have attempted, however weakly, to call public attention to the condition of the people; but when you come here

with your cool assumptions and daring charges, when you say—"Look at the condition of the peasantry, and see what protection has done for them;" why, I call on you for facts and dates. I ask you what was the condition of the peasantry of England before the influence of this system of protection? I say, that, even with this accumumulated mass of population, it was worse then than at present. I have read details of the condition of the peasantry of England, especially in the western counties, during the last years of the revolutionary war, when we had a free importation of corn from France and Holland; I have seen descriptions of their state at that time, and in nothing was it less miserable than their present condition, except that there was then a wild and indiscriminate assistance given by irresponsible persons in the name of poor rate, which only sustained the wild and reckless, to the injury of the industrious and the orderly. You bring forward your Goatacre meetings! The right hon. Baronet, the other night, compared an hon. Member on this side of the House to Anacharsis Cloots. That reminds me of a story I have read of that distinguished personage, who once announced to the French Convention that a deputation had arrived from all the nations of Europe, anxious to express their gratitude to that illustrious body for their visions of philanthropy, and their efforts in behalf of the human race. The Convention was impressed with awe at the solemnity of their position; the deputation appeared, introduced by Anacharsis Cloots, in appropriate costume, each one wearing the dress of his own country; the circumstance produced a great sensation throughout Paris; to the whole of Europe the wonderful event was announced; and after the deputation had been received, they dined together at the Café du Paris, and probably, at night, danced at the *bal costume* in the same carnival costumes. Now, I think the deputation from Goatacre comes from the same market. It is not because I advert to these hacknied acts of faction—that I wish to draw away your attention from the condition of Wiltshire and the western counties of England—let them be as miserable and wretched as you say; paint the wretch who lives in a hovel, badly fed and badly clothed: admit all—but when you turn round and say "Protection is the cause of this," I ask, why do you not go to the manufacturing districts? Enter with me into a factory at Stockport or Manchester, and I will show you human suffering—I will show you human degradation—I will bring you to a hovel where the exhausted slave curses the life which he cannot quit. I might say, "Competition has done this." Can I, could I do this? No; because I am too well acquainted with the noble industry of the manufacturing counties, to condescend to such a representation. I could point to a factory, where I believe you would find people in as wretched a condition as any of those in the villages to which you refer; but I know that the industry of Lancashire is a well-ordered and a noble industry—I know that this case, though not isolated, is in truth only one of the exceptional cases of a great and beneficial system; and I would not condescend to such vile arts of faction. If protection have given the peasant of Wiltshire 7*s.* a week, protection has equally given the peasant of Lincolnshire an ample remuneration for his toil. If you accept one case, you must take the other. They prove that the misery is in spite of protection, and infer therefore that its withdrawal might aggravate it. Well, then, we find the people employed, though not so well as we could wish; we find their condition, in many instances, bad, but superior generally, to that of the other nations of Europe; and we cannot assent to your bold assumption that you will improve their condition by introducing foreign labour into competition with theirs; or to your second proposition, that you will elevate their character by diminishing their wages. I know how you will respond to that; that you will tell me that the wages of labour do not depend on the price of corn: those are axioms of which we have heard to weariness. I am not going to enter into that now. ["Hear, hear!"] Well, then, I will enter into it. I had taken into consideration the hour of the night; but as the hon. Member taunts me, I will deal with that question. I will admit, then, for the purpose of the argument, that the wages of labour are not dependent on the price of corn, but that the price of corn, as was said by the right hon. Baronet, acts rather in an inverse ratio: how then can the price of corn injure the manufacturers? It can't increase the price of their article; the higher the price of corn the cheaper ought to be their article, because the lower are wages; but if the position which the right hon. Baronet takes—and yours, for he borrowed it from you—if that position be correct, and if it be true

that the wages of labour do not depend on the price of corn; suppose you have four millions of quarters imported from the Baltic, but wages are not increased—and remember, they would not be increased, because the wages of labour do not depend on the price of corn—why should the consumption be greater? And if not greater, what then would be the effect of importing four millions of quarters from the Baltic? If the consumption were not greater, you must substitute the four millions of quarters from the Baltic, for four millions of English quarters, and at the same time you must have a proportionate displacement of the wages of labour; and then, the labour so displaced, must go and mix with manufacturing labour; and then, according to your own principle, that the rate of wages depends on the demand and supply of labour, wages must be reduced —wages must fall. That is the dilemma in which I leave you. Another point of great importance with reference to this question, is the effect of sudden importations on our monetary system. I will not at this late hour trace all the consequences of the contraction of our currency, which are familiar to us all. You attribute them to the Corn Laws; we, on the other hand, say that they are owing to your system of importing corn from abroad; and you rejoin, that if the trade were regular, the supply would be regular. I admit it; I will admit that if the trade were regular, the supply would be regular. In discussing this question throughout, I have endeavoured to admit as axioms the assumption on which you rest, and I admit this one; but suppose there is a great deficiency in England at any given time, you would still, under your new system, have to import an extra supply in addition to that ordinarily imported—you would require two or three millions of quarters more than was expected; and for that you must pay in gold, and your currency be subject to the same derangement. The only difference is, that under the present system you hold out a bonus to your granaries, while, generally speaking, as soon as you have a regular supply, it will never be more than sufficient for the average demand. So that the very argument on which you rest is fatal to your case. I have now nearly concluded the observations which I shall address to the House. I have omitted a great deal which I wished to urge upon the House; and I sincerely wish that what I have said had been urged with more ability; but I have endeavoured not to make a mere Corn Law speech; I have only taken corn as an illustration; but I don't like my friends here to enter upon that Corn Law debate which I suppose is impending, under a mistaken notion of the position in which they stand. I never did rest my defence of the Corn Laws on the burdens to which the land is subject. I believe that there are burdens, heavy burdens, on the land; but the land has great honours, and he who has great honours must have great burdens. But I wish them to bear in mind that their cause must be sustained by great principles. I venture feebly and slightly to indicate those principles, principles of high policy, on which their system ought to be sustained. First, without reference to England, looking at all countries, I say that it is the first duty of the Minister, and the first interest of the State, to maintain a balance between the two great branches of national industry; that is a principle which has been recognised by all great Ministers for the last two hundred years; and the reasons upon which it rests are so obvious, that it can hardly be necessary to mention them. Why we should maintain that balance between the two great branches of national industry, involves political considerations—social considerations, affecting the happiness, prosperity, and morality of the people, as well as the stability of the State. But I go further; I say that in England we are bound to do more—I repeat what I have repeated before, that in this country there are special reasons why we should not only maintain the balance between the two branches of our national industry, but why we should give a preponderance—I do not say a predominance, which was the word ascribed by the hon. Member for Manchester to the noble Lord the Member for London, but which he never used—why we should give a preponderance, for that is the proper and constitutional word, to the agricultural branch; and the reason is, because in England we have a territorial Constitution. We have thrown upon the land the revenues of the Church, the administration of justice, and the estate of the poor; and this has been done, not to gratify the pride, or pamper the luxury of the proprietors of the land, but because, in a territorial Constitution, you, and those whom you have succeeded, have found the only security for self-government—the only barrier against that centralising system which has taken root in

other countries. I have always maintained these opinions: my constituents are not landlords; they are not aristocrats; they are not great capitalists; they are the children of industry and toil; and they believe, first, that their material interests are involved in a system which favours native industry, by insuring at the same time real competition; but they believe also that their social and political interests are involved in a system by which their rights and liberties have been guaranteed; and I agree with them—I have these old-fashioned notions. I know that we have been told, and by one who on this subject should be the highest authority, that we shall derive from this great struggle, not merely the repeal of the Corn Laws, but the transfer of power from one class to another—to one distinguished for its intelligence and wealth, the manufacturers of England. My conscience assures me that I have not been slow in doing justice to the intelligence of that class; certain I am, that I am not one of those who envy them their wide and deserved prosperity; but I must confess my deep mortification, that in an age of political regeneration, when all social evils are ascribed to the operation of class interests, it should be suggested that we are to be rescued from the alleged power of one class only to sink under the avowed dominion of another. I, for one, if this is to be the end of all our struggles—if this is to be the great result of this enlightened age—I, for one, protest against the ignominious catastrophe. I believe that the monarchy of England, its sovereignty mitigated by the acknowledged authority of the estates of the realm, has its root in the hearts of the people, and is capable of securing the happiness of the nation and the power of the State. But, Sir, if this be a worn-out dream—if, indeed, there is to be a change, I, for one, anxious as I am to maintain the present polity of this country, ready to make as many sacrifices as any man for that object—if there is to be this great change, I, for one, hope, that the foundations of it may be deep, the scheme comprehensive, and that instead of falling under such a thraldom, under the thraldom of Capital—under the thraldom of those, who, while they boast of their intelligence, are more proud of their wealth—if we must find a new force to maintain the ancient throne and immemorial monarchy of England, I, for one, hope, that we may find that novel power in the invigorating energies of an educated and enfranchised people.

Debate again adjourned.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, February 23, 1846.

MINUTES.] PUBLIC BILLS.—2ª. Protection of Life (Ireland), (No. 2).

PETITIONS PRESENTED. By the Earl of Clare, from Physicians and Surgeons of the City and County of Limerick, for the better Regulation, and for the more efficient Support, of Medical Charities (Ireland).—From Samuel Gordon, of Aungier Street, Dublin, in favour of the Protection of Life (Ireland) Bill (No. 2), and suggesting the Insertion of a Clause for the Trial of Cases of Deliberate Assassination before Courts Martial.

PROTECTION OF LIFE (IRELAND) BILL (No. 2).

The EARL of ST. GERMANS said: I rise for the purpose of asking your Lordships to give your sanction to a measure which nothing but the urgent necessity of the case would, in my opinion, have justified Her Majesty's Government in proposing, or your Lordships in adopting. Of the necessity of the case, it will now be my duty to endeavour to satisfy your Lordships. This Bill proposes to invest the Executive Government in Ireland with powers which no existing law invests it with; and powers with which, under ordinary circumstances, I think it ought not to be invested, It is a matter of notoriety to all, that the crime of murder and outrageous assault in Ireland, has become lamentably frequent. But I should not, I think, be justified in asking your Lordships to give your assent to a measure of this kind, without laying before your Lordships official documents upon the subject. I am not to take for granted that your Lordships are cognizant of the facts. I shall, therefore, be compelled, considering the importance of the subject, to draw upon your Lordships' patience at some length, whilst I read some of the numerous returns and reports which have been received in reference to the state of crime in Ireland. The Return which I now hold in my hand contains an account of all offences that have been committed in Ireland during the last two years; I mean of offences that have been reported to the Government by the Constabulary. It is the practice in Ireland for every crime to be reported by the Superintendent of the Constabulary district in which it occurs, to the Inspector General, and by him to the Government. The offences which I shall now refer to are those against the person and against the public peace. In the year 1844, there were no less than 144 homicides in Ireland; last year there were 136. During the last year the number of cases of firing into houses was 104; during the present year,

138. Of aggravated assault, last year, 504; this year, 544. Of common assault, last year, there were 251 cases; the present year, 242. I will pass by offences against property, which your Lordships are aware are of comparatively rare occurrence in Ireland, as compared with crimes of that kind in England. With respect to offences against the public peace, last year the cases of demand or robbery of fire-arms was 159; the present year, 551. Of unlawfully carrying arms, last year, 79; the present year, 89. Of administering unlawful oaths, last year, 59; the present year, 223. Of sending threatening notices and letters, last year, 362; and, in the present year, these cases have increased to the frightful number of 1,944. The number of cases of attacking houses, last year, were 254; the present year, 483. The number of dwelling-houses fired into, last year, were 77; in the present year, 148. This makes a total of this class of offences of 1,495, last year; and 3,462, in the present year. The grand total of all offences committed in Ireland against the person, against property, and against the public peace was, last year, 3,103; in the present year, 5,281. But, my Lords, I will now proceed to state what I am sure must be, in some degree, consolatory to your Lordships to know, that, in eighteen counties of Ireland, crime has diminished in the last two years, and in four others it has remained stationary. It is only in ten counties that the commission of crime has increased. These counties are Cavan, Fermanagh, King's County, Longford, Westmeath, Clare, Roscommon, Limerick, Tipperary, and Leitrim. The state of crime in these counties, during the last and the present year, is as follows:—

County.	Cases last Year.	Cases present Year.
Cavan	109	257
Fermanagh	80	166
King's County	226	301
Longford	205	372
Westmeath	163	313
Clare	279	327
Roscommon	264	716
Limerick	321	416
Tipperary	908	992
Leitrim	328	922

This is the general result of the returns forwarded to the Government as to the number of crimes committed in these counties, during the past and present year. My Lords, it is now my painful duty to read to your Lordships some of the most remarkable cases of homicide and outrage that have been perpetrated in Ireland during the last year; and I do so the more readily, because I think it is desirable that your Lordships should be able to form correct notions of the circumstances under which those crimes have been committed, and, as far as may be, form some judgment of the nature of the remedy that may be required. I will now proceed to read some account of the outrages which I am in possession of. On the 22nd of July, last year, the house of Andrew Hickey, in South Tipperary, the steward of Mr. Leonard Keating, a justice of the peace, was entered by four men, armed with guns and a bayonet. They inflicted several bayonet wounds on his body, of which he died four days after. The men were disguised. On the 22nd of July, in Limerick, the house of Timothy Mahoney, a farmer, was entered by five men, with their faces blackened, and armed with guns. He was so violently treated that, in two days after, he died of his injuries. It was confidently believed that these men were hired from a distance. On the 5th of October, in Clare, Arthur Gloster, of Moylish, a proprietor, who had lately levied on some of his tenantry for rent, and served several notices to quit, was shot dead in the high road, about five P.M. On the 6th of October, in North Tipperary, David Maxwell, of Clonakenny, the under-agent of Mr. P. D. Latouche, was in the act of retiring to rest for the night, when he was shot through his window, which was without shutter or screen, and died of the wounds he received. The perpetrators of that act have not been discovered. In Limerick, Thomas Macnamara was found dead in the road with the back of his head beaten in, as if with a spade. It seems he had been appointed a bogranger in the place of somebody else, who had been dismissed. In Roscommon, Michael Shiel and his son, carriers, having paid a higher price for corn than the neighbouring carmen, were violently assaulted as they returned home by six men. The elder Shiel's skull was fractured, and he survived but two days. Their assailants were not identified. I mention this case, because it is rather uncommon that persons should be ill treated for having purchased corn at a higher price than their neighbours. On the 30th of September, 1845, at 10 P.M., three men, with faces blackened, entered the house of Michael Hill, at Garraneby, armed with bludgeons, and, not

finding him, went into another house next door, belonging to George Hewitt, whom they found sitting on a chair. They so severely assaulted him on the head with sticks that he died next day. This, my Lords, is the case of a murder intended to have been committed on one person, and, because the perpetrators could not find him, they wreak their vengeance on his next door neighbour. I beg now to call your Lordships' attention to a remarkable notice that was published in the county of Tipperary by the board of directors of the Mining Company of Ireland, giving notice that the company's works at the Earlshill Colliery, on the 20th of December then next, or at the earliest day compatible with existing contracts, would be suspended; and that the board had been compelled to take this step in consequence of the threats and outrages to which their stewards, Martin, Morris, and others, had been subjected, and by the threatening notices subsequently served on those well-disposed workmen who were desirous to work under the company and earn support for themselves and families, but whose lives were too highly valued by the board to be risked by a continuance of the works, until sufficient protection could be afforded to them. This company employ a very large body of persons, and because these men choose to take umbrage at the agents or stewards of the company, they are actually compelled to stop the works, and turn a large body of men out of employment. Another case of outrage to which I will refer is contained in the following report—

"On the 29th of November, about 5 o'clock, as Nicholas Carney, steward to Mr. Richard Dyas, justice of the peace, was returning from his master's house to his own at Dervottstown (situate in the parish of Killua), a distance of half a mile, and midway he was attacked and knocked down by a party of five men armed with loaded bludgeons, who beat him in a most shocking manner, whereby his life is in danger. Being on duty at Mullingar I was unable to visit the scene until to-day, when I requested the attendance of Mr. Dyas to take the man's depositions. On visiting Carney I found him in a most deplorable condition, his head and face being one mass of bruises, not able to see or speak, and all his body frightfully contused. In consequence of the man's state, I was obliged to obtain the necessary information from Mr. Dyas, who had seen him soon after the occurrence, which was to the effect that he knew none of the party, nor could he give a description of any, as he was instantly knocked down and rendered senseless. His assailants never spoke a word during the attack. The only reason Mr. Dyas can assign for so brutal an attack is the extreme confidence with which he treated Carney, in consequence of his zealous attention to his interests and the fidelity with which he discharged the duties of his situation."

Another instance is from the county of Armagh, which is not one of the counties where crime has been on the increase. The following is a communication from a justice of the peace of that county :—

"Carmagh-house, Sunday, Dec. 14, 1845.

"Sir—I beg to report to you, for the information of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, that at half-past seven o'clock this morning a party calling themselves Molly Macguires attacked a house on my property, which house they had pulled down last month, and was rebuilt by some of my tenants, and in which a man and his family were living. They beat the man very severely, ordered his family out of the house, and then pulled the house down, fired a number of shots, and went off cheering. The noise was so great it awoke me, although the house is about half a mile distant. I sent an alarm to the police, but by the time they were ready the Molly Macguires were too far off for any of them to be captured. Although it was daylight, and the uproar so great, not a creature came to the assistance of the unfortunate man, nor did they alarm the police, which shows how complete their organization is. I beg to say, if some immediate measures are not taken to check these outrages, no person's life in this county will be safe, except he joins the Molly Macguires. Before the party left the house they charged the man they beat to tell me that if they had time they would have paid me a visit, but they would do so when they had time. Reports of the former outrages have been forwarded to the Lieutenant of the county, and reported by the police to the authorities. I have the honour, &c.

"John Robert Irwin, Justice of the Peace."

Another case is from Clare :—

"Tulla, Jan. 9, 1846.

"I am sorry to be again obliged to report that an outrage of a very serious nature occurred in this neighbourhood yesterday evening. On my visiting the place this day, I learned the following particulars, namely, that about half-past 6 o'clock on the previous evening, a party of armed men, about nine in number, wearing bonnets, and having their faces blackened, entered the house of a respectable farmer of the name of Murphy, and after discharging a blunderbuss in his face, which fortunately only contained some powder, they in the most savage manner commenced beating Murphy with the butt ends of their guns and clubs, and only left off beating him when they thought he was dead ; they broke his leg and left his head in a most frightful state ; there are two physicians attending him, who have but slight hopes of his recovery. They also inflicted several wounds on his son and daughter. The latter is also confined to her bed in a bad state. The son several times endeavoured to discharge a blunderbuss at them while beating his father, but unfortunately it would not go off, though heavily loaded. The party then went away, taking with them three guns and a blunderbuss. The family all deny having any knowledge of any of them. The cause assigned for this brutal attack is, that Murphy, about seven years ago, took a farm of land from which some people had been ejected. There is no clue at present that could lead to the apprehension of any of the party." . . . . "Sub-Inspector Comyns

has succeeded in arresting three of the party, one of whom has been identified as a principal in the outrage by Murphy's servant boy, and as it is feared he will either leave the country or be deterred from prosecuting, I have directed the police to keep him in their barracks for some time."

This is communicated by Mr. Thomas Baily, resident magistrate in Clare. Your Lordships will not fail to notice this important fact, that a conviction cannot be procured, in many instances, unless the witnesses are taken up and kept in confinement. From Moate we have the following letter from Mr. Irwine, Manager of the National Bank :—

"Moate, County of Westmeath, Jan. 9, 1846.

"Sir—I am manager of the National Bank in this town. My mother, an aged lady, living at Fern-hall, near Castle Plunket, in the county of Roscommon, was, on last Sunday night, at 7 o'clock, visited by a band of armed men (about ten), masked. They broke in the kitchen door, and sent the servants for my poor mother. She and my sister came down. They were most rudely assailed. My poor mother, a feeble widow, was placed on her knees, a loaded pistol put to her breast, and she was then sworn to discharge a herd, and give his place to another. I take the liberty of bringing this matter under your notice, hoping you will have the goodness to instruct the police of Castle Plunket to patrol more frequently (as I apprehend another attack) about my mother's grounds, which are situated within a mile of the barracks. The Government can hardly have an idea of the dreadful state of alarm in which every well-disposed member of the community and of Her Majesty's subjects in these districts are from the wild and savage laws of these midnight legislators, which are now more than ever in the ascendant, and from which neither rank, sex, nor age is exempt.—I have the honour to be, Sir, &c. "P. D. Irwine.

"N.B. After leaving the house a volley of heavy stones was thrown at the windows, and glass, sash, and shutters, were scattered about the room; this occurred in the next field to the Roman Catholic chapel of the parish, so early as 7 o'clock in the evening."

Mr. Comyns, Sub-Inspector in the county of Clare, district of Tulla, writes as follows :—

"Tulla, Jan. 9, 1846.

"I have to report, that on the night of the 8th instant, about 7 o'clock, eight or nine men, unknown, all of whom are supposed to have been armed with guns and blunderbusses, entered the house of Michael Murphy, at Laharden, and fired a shot into the house on entering it, and obliged Murphy's daughter to light a candle, while they searched the rooms and took away the arms noted underneath, and also beat Michael Murphy so severely with the butt end of a gun or a blunderbuss, that his life is in great danger from the wounds on his head. His daughter, Honor Murphy, is also much injured from having been beaten in the same manner; and his son, and two labouring servants, named O'Brien and Boland, but not so severely. The party had their faces blackened, wore women's caps, and had no shoes, as the house was near a bog, which it appears they crossed. On hearing of the outrage, I proceeded immediately there, with head constable Shaw and party, who searched the neighbourhood promptly, but without effect. I have directed the attendance of the constabulary doctor; and Mr. Bailey, R.M., concurs with me as to the reward. The guns taken were registered and numbered cl. 1784, 1785, 1786, and 1787. I should have added that the cause of this outrage is, that Murphy took the land and house he occupies from Mr. H. Butler, of Castle Erin, on the termination of a lease, and from which some persons were ejected. The party, when beating Murphy, told him to take that for robbing poor people of their land. It is ten years since he took the land. Neither Murphy nor any of the persons in the house knew or even could describe or identify any of that party."

Next, as to the county of Tipperary, I will read the following letter :—

"Nenagh, Feb. 2, 1846.

"On yesterday, as Mrs. Bennett, of Moneyquil, was driving to Ballinaclough Church, she was stopped on the road by two men, one armed with a pistol and the other with a wattle, and ordered to put away two of her men, Henzy and Fechally: on her asking them what they had done, they snapped the pistol twice at her, and gave her three blows with the wattle, which severely injured her arms. Henzy, whom they ordered to be turned away, has been repeatedly attacked within the last few years, and who is the same man who, a short time since, was fired at through the window at Moneyquil-house, while eating his supper, and wounded in the arm with a ball, although there were two men stationed in the house for his protection. Finding no threats could intimidate him, and that it is difficult to get at him, in consequence of the presence of the police, they have resorted to this cowardly attack on an old lady, nearly blind, and against whom they have no complaint, but for keeping men in her employment whom she considers faithful. I do not particularly mention this case on account of the amount of injury done, as Mrs. Bennett has not received any serious injury; and she thinks herself the pistol was not loaded, and only snapped to intimidate her; but it clearly proves to what a state of inhuman barbarity many of the people of this country are reduced, when they can thus assault a feeble old lady while on her way to church; with what endless perseverance they follow up their designs when once formed; and another of the numerous instances, that it is not the rights of property they alone attempt to put an end to, but all right to the freedom of action or even judgment. "Jas. Tabuteau, R.M."

This lady is upwards of eighty years of age. —The next document is a letter, dated—

"Nenagh, Feb. 9, 1846.

"Between seven and eight o'clock on yesterday morning a party of twelve men, all armed with guns, made a simultaneous rush into the dwelling of Michael Gleeson, who was in bed, as was all his family, with the exception of his daughter Judy, who had opened the door. The armed men dragged Gleeson out of bed and beat him about the body and head with the butt end of their guns, inflicting two wounds (seemingly dangerous) on his head. Gleeson's son, who slept in an opposite room, hearing the up-

roar, got out of bed, and was immediately attacked in his attempt to oppose his assailants' ingress to his apartment; one of the villains fired a shot at him, which missed him, the two balls striking the wall in his rear. After a struggle they forced into his room, and treated him in a manner similar to that of his father, inflicting three severe cuts on his head. After breaking twelve panes of glass, and all the delf in the house, and ordering Gleeson to give up the land (9½ acres) to Seymour, or they would pay him another and a more serious visit, they went away. Gleeson came into possession of this land twenty years ago, and out of which Seymour was dispossessed for non-payment of rent. Though there were five of Gleeson's sons in the house, not one of them informed the police of this occurrence; had they done so, there is little doubt but that the Corbally party would have succeeded in tracing out the offenders, as they were seen to pass up the mountains within less than a mile of that barrack (Corbally). Nor would they even describe to me any of this gang, although Gleeson's daughter and one of his sons, from the opportunities they had, could, I am convinced, do so; however, such is the system of terror prevalent in this district, my belief is, that had this gang murdered old Gleeson, not one of his family would come forward to vindicate the law, unless forced to do so. I directed the constable at Corbally to bring into Nenagh on to-morrow the son and daughter of Gleeson, and should their evidence be of any importance I will report accordingly. The resident magistrate approves of the suggested reward."

Such is the system of terror in this district that not one of these people would come forward to vindicate the law unless compelled to do so. I now come to notice some of the principal homicides that have taken place in Ireland:—

"January 27.

"John Ryan (county of Tipperary), a farmer, was about to propose for land, the property of Mr. Philips, of Mount Rivers. There had, in this case, been no compulsory ejectment, or rigorous exaction of righs. The occupier, it is said, voluntarily resigned one-half of the farm—alleging his inability to hold the entire—and continued to retain the other half. The deceased, represented to be of respectable character, of some substance, and a native of the place, made no secret of his intention to propose for the unoccupied land, and had no apprehension of consequences. On his way, however, to the proprietor, he was assailed by two men (strangers to himself), one of whom pulled him from his horse, and fractured his head with a stone. He survived only a few days. Two persons were taken into custody on strong suspicion, but the injured man, evidently fearing the consequences to his family, would make no disclosures tending to their identification."

The next case is the murder of Captain M'Leod, in the county of Leitrim, a gentleman who had been formerly in the army, and was by all who knew him highly esteemed. He was for some years in the county of Tipperary, where he was eminently successful in calming down the disturbances which prevailed in that county, and where, by the discharge of his duties, and by the amiability of his disposition, he obtained for himself the esteem of all parties in the district. Captain M'Leod was afterwards removed to Fermanagh, where his services, on account of the disturbed state of that district, were deemed of importance; but when outrages broke out in Leitrim, he was sent to that district as resident magistrate. On all hands he was admitted to be one of the most humane, moderate, and peaceful of men; yet he fell a victim to the spirit of outrage which so unhappily prevails in Ireland. Here is the account of his murder:—

"January 29.

"John M'Leod, Esq., R.M. (county of Leitrim).—Towards the close of November, 1844, the peace of the northern part of the county of Cavan, and the adjoining part of Leitrim, had become very seriously disturbed by numerous armed and organized bodies of Whiteboys. To meet these circumstances, the magistracy applied for an increased police force, and an additional stipendiary magistrate. The required police were immediately supplied; and Mr. M'Leod, the resident magistrate stationed at Enniskillen, was selected by the Government, and temporarily placed at Balinamore, in aid of the local authorities in the suppression of the illegal organization referred to. On the day above stated, Mr. M'Leod had been dining with W. Percy, Esq., J. P., of Garadice, and had set out in the evening on his return to his own quarters. Finding Mr. Percy's lodge-gate shut (contrary to practice when company is entertained), Mr. M'Leod was in the act of desiring the driver of his car to get it opened, when he was fired at from behind an opening in the evergreen at the lodge-gate, where the assassin aided by the light of a candle, left (as if designedly) in the lodge, is believed to have deliberately taken his aim. The gunshot penetrated the heart and lungs, and caused instantaneous death. There is no doubt that a conspiracy had been formed; and it is an ascertained fact that a notice of the murder was posted at Enniskillen two days before its perpetration. Some of the circumstances above described strongly implicating the gatekeeper, he, with other suspected individuals, was afterwards taken into custody; but after prolonged and searching inquiries by the magistrates assembled for the purpose, the evidence was not found to be sufficiently conclusive, and the parties were liberated on bail. That this outrage is referable to feelings of revenge prompted by Mr. M'Leod's discharge of his magisterial duty, but one opinion has been expressed; two circumstances have, however, been mentioned as its immediate existing cause: by some it is attributed to his having refused to bail certain individuals in custody on serious offences; by others, to a decision made by Mr. M'Leod, some days previously, at Bawnboy petty sessions."

This murder had excited everywhere but one feeling of indignation and regret.

"Patrick Swift was found dead in the river of the town of Galway: there were several marks of

violence about his body and head. He had come to the town to give evidence in a civic bill case, which was dismissed in his (Swift's) absence. Some threatening expressions were used towards him by some of the relatives of the defendant, who were chiefly interested in the case. One of these was arrested, and from his contradictory evidence and terrified appearance, he was obliged by the coroner to find bail to appear when called on."

"John Waters (county of Tipperary) had been in the employment of Mr. H. Going, of Riverlawn, and was a stranger at the place. As he was returning to his master's residence, with a man named Corrigan (whose services as ploughman were likely to be superseded by those of Waters), several men armed with bludgeons, according to the statement of Corrigan, leaped off the road into the grove. Corrigan says he ran away, and looking back saw the party strike Waters to the ground, and that on returning shortly after, he found Waters speechless. He did not report the circumstance immediately on his arrival at the house, and his conduct being suspicious he was taken into custody, and committed for examination."

"Mr. James Gallagher (county of Cavan) was sub-agent to Mr. Enery, of Ballyconnell house. A considerable amount of old arrears was due by the tenantry on Mr. Enery's property, and Mr. Gallagher was supposed to be the only person fully acquainted with the state of affairs, and competent to undertake the recovery of the rents. As he was proceeding from Mr. Enery's residence, accompanied by the gatekeeper, he was followed by two men, one of whom shot him in the back, of which he died within an hour. The occurrence took place before dark, on the confines of the town, and in the presence of several people; but no information could be obtained leading to the identification of the assassins."

"Cavan, Monday evening, May 19, 1845.

"My dear Sir—I have only just returned from Enniskillen, and write a hurried line to inform you that poor Mrs. Gallagher, wife of the man who was shot at Ballyconnell on Wednesday last, died last night. She was so dreadfully shocked on hearing of her husband's murder, that she scarcely ever spoke a word after.—I have, &c.

"Colonel M'Gregor, &c." "J. Battersby.

"Cavan, May 22, 1845.

"My dear Sir—I wrote to you on Monday last, telling you of the death of poor Mrs. Gallagher, whose husband was murdered on Wednesday night, the 14th inst. I have now another sad piece of information to communicate—his mother died last night. She was a healthy, poor strong old woman; but got such a shock on hearing of her son being shot, that she never after left her bed. I also understand that Gallagher's daughter, fifteen years of age, is quite out of her mind.—I am, &c.,

"Colonel M'Gregor, &c." "J. Battersby.

"Fanny M'Elhill (Tyrone) was the wife of a woodranger, who had made himself obnoxious by prosecuting trespassers. She had proceeded from her own dwelling, with her little daughter, when she was fired at from a wood by the road side. Some of the charge entered the child's head, and it is feared her brain is injured; the mother was wounded in different parts of the body, and died in a day or two after, having previously given birth to a still-born child. Suspicion rests on the former ranger, who was discharged about a year ago; but there is not sufficient evidence to warrant proceedings."

There are many more of these cases; but I really think I may close this black catalogue. I think, too, I have said quite enough. I do not wish to harrow the feelings of your Lordships unnecessarily by the recital of these enormities; but there are one or two which I will lay before you, to show the state of the country at this particular time:—

"On the 13th inst. a party of about sixteen men came to the house of Thomas Cowan, beat his sons, and, having found him concealed, beat him severely, compelling his wife to hold a candle for them. The cause assigned is having endeavoured to make some cottier tenants pay rents for the houses they have on his land. He denies publicly that he has any knowledge of any of the party; but his eldest son privately informed me that both he and his father knew some of them, and that they will come privately and lodge informations; but not until they first sell their farm and stock, &c., preparatory to their leaving the country, as they consider it unsafe to remain in it much longer; and they are afraid that should they publicly lodge their informations they could not effect the sale of their property. I have communicated this circumstance to the resident magistrate, with whom I have arranged to take their informations privately on the first opportunity."

"Two armed men searched three houses, at Canadoan, for arms; they only obtained an old sword. On leaving the house of T. Mullvennin, they discharged some powder into his face, which slightly injured him."

"The following outrages took place in the Elphin district on the 11th inst.:—A party of forty or fifty men visited the house of John Watkins, robbed him of a pistol, and swore him to reduce his conacre rent. A party of ten or twelve men attacked the house of James Hogg for his arms; he resisted and fired on them (though eighty years of age); they returned the fire and fled. A party entered the house of John Simpson, and searched it for arms. A dispute took place on this day between P. Healy and four persons named Waters; they beat Healy so that he died on the 15th. Three of the Waterses are in custody. On the same evening, the 11th inst., they visited the house of Mr. Owen Reynolds, and cautioned him not to charge more than half-rent for his conacre."

I call the attention of the House to the following letter from three magistrates of the county Tipperary:—

"We beg to direct the attention of Her Majesty's Government to the informations we herewith send respecting an agrarian outrage committed in this district on Friday last, as forcibly illustrative of the present state of society in this district, and of the total insufficiency of the law to prevent or punish offences of the kind. A party of five men, two armed with muskets, one with a pistol, another with a wattle, and the fifth with a pitchfork, entered the house of a man of the name of Michael Murray, holding between seventy and eighty acres of land, and brutally assaulted himself and his family. On Monday, sub-inspector Morgan, and a party of six policemen, went to the man's house to inquire into the case. Murray's daughter, Biddy Murray, a young woman over twenty years of age, told the police (see their informations) who the

assailants were, and described the particular acts of individuals of the party. Mr. Morgan and his party immediately went in search of these men, and succeeded in arresting four of them, a duty which occupied them from seven o'clock on Monday evening to nine o'clock on Tuesday morning. We were apprized of the case by the police, and remained investigating it in the barracks of Roscrea from noon till dusk. On Tuesday, Murray's family were brought into Roscrea, under an escort of police. Murray's brother, Martin Murray, a man also of the higher class of farmers, with a crowd of other people, followed the car on which Michael Murray's family were, and, being prevented by the police from coming into immediate contact with them, he called out to his niece Biddy Murray, the principal witness, 'not to be an informer, or to have it said in the country she was one.' This appears by the girl's sworn information, as also by the information of constable Connors; the result of this was, that on the girl's being sworn, she refused to identify the parties (arrested, on her own statement of the previous evening, by the police), and denied that she knew who any of them were. Murray, his wife, his servant man, and his two other children, all of whom we examined on oath, refused equally to give any evidence on the subject which could lead to the conviction of the offenders, and we had no alternative but to liberate the prisoners. Thus the very praiseworthy exertions of Mr. Morgan and his party, and our own anxious endeavours to make the offenders in this case amenable to justice, were of no avail. The system of intimidation established in this country proved an overmatch for the constabulary, the magistrates, and the law.—We have the honour to remain, &c.

"J. V. Prettie,
"W. P. Birch,
"F. A. Jackson.

"To R. Pennefather, Esq., Under-Secretary."

I may refer also to the Shannon Commission and the great works for the improvement of the Shannon navigation, to point out the intimidation of the men there who are willing to go on with the work, if permitted to do so; but I will give only one more case, to show the extent of audacity to which these people go. It is a case that occurred no longer ago than the 18th of February, five days ago, and relates to a person of the name of O'Brien, an excellent officer of the Constabulary:—

"I have to report that about eleven o'clock on the night of the 17th, as constable D. O'Brien, of this station, and sub-constables M. Kearney, C. Rohen, W. Ireton, J. Kenna, and W. Donohoe, were on patrol, they heard the sound of voices near them; they stopped a short time and heard a shot fired, at which they proceeded at once in the direction of the shot, and perceived a man armed with a gun, whom they called on to surrender; he replied that he would not; upon which he was arrested by Rohen. His name is Pat Cosheen, from the county of Cork. After securing Cosheen, the police proceeded a short distance, when several shots were fired by a body of men, about fifteen in number, who were in front of the police. At this time, a ball or slug struck Kearney in the temple, which only slightly wounded him and perforated his forage cap; and a bullet passed through the watch-coat of Ireton. The police called on the party to surrender, and charged them, at the same time firing upon them. One of said party was at this time secured, named J. Hulan, upon whose person a number of percussion caps were found; he was then handcuffed to Cosheen, upon which several shots were fired at the police; the police returned the fire, and succeeding in arresting a man named Pat Dwyer, who ran off when about to be secured; he was recaptured, and in the effort received a gunshot wound, which, entering near his left breast passed through his body; he also received a bayonet wound in the side; he is in the Bridewell here, and lies in a dangerous state. When Dwyer was recaptured, one of the party came to his aid, and fired a pistol at constable O'Brien, upon which the constable struck him on the breast with his bayonet, and sub-constable Rohen fired at him, and it is supposed wounded him, as he was seen to stagger. He succeeded in making his escape. He is supposed to be Patrick Rufoyle, from the county of Tipperary. At this stage the fellows separated to both sides and rear of the police, and fired several shots at them, which were returned. There was a small cabin, occupied by a man named Gorman, quite close, into which the constable decided to go with his party, as, from the darkness of the night and the manner of the Rockites, he thought his life and those of his men would be endangered by a fire from behind the road ditch. After the police had retired into the house, a shot was fired into it; they did not deem it prudent to go out, but preferred to resist an attack; they remained in the house until morning, when a reinforcement from this joined them, who marched the three men already named into this town; they have been fully committed for trial at the assizes; but Dwyer will not, if at all, be able to move for some time. Messrs. Burke and Russell, justices of the peace, came in here immediately after; they accompanied me to the scene, with fifteen men; we scoured the neighbourhood in the hope of meeting some of the party, several of whom must have been wounded, but did not succeed. I had previously sent to the Altar and Garrysfillane stations to intercept the escape of any of the fellows; the police fired thirty-five rounds of their ammunition."

Your Lordships perceive it was a regular engagement.

"The gun found with Cosheen is a very formidable weapon, being a large rifle with an excellent percussion lock. A pistol was found on the place where the attack took place; also the barrel of a gun, and a portion of the brass mounting, which must have exploded during the conflict. The three men in custody are the worst characters in the county, and were looked upon as the leaders of armed gangs, who go about committing assassinations for hire. Cosheen is the person named in my report of the 27th ult., relative to the homicide of James Lynch. About thirty bullets were found at the scene, which the party must have dropped. The wife of the man into whose house the police went, became so alarmed when the shot was fired into it, as to place her life in danger. I sent a doctor to her. I also procured medical aid for the man whom the police wounded. The armed party must at the time have been proceeding to commit some serious outrage; and I am of opinion, that they were going to the neighbourhood of Ballingady, where persons are

about being evicted; and in reference to which Mr. Coote received a Rockite notice, as reported on the 17th inst.; they possibly were going to attack Mr. Coote. No circumstance has occurred for a long time which, in my opinion, tends more to improve the peace of the country than the one in question."

I am sure it is a most dreadful way of effecting that end.

"It has also, I am sure, caused great dismay to those ruffians who are leagued for the pepetration of ruin, and secured for the police, in the opinion of the peasantry, a confidence which, I trust, may induce them to look to the authorities for protection, instead of considering those marauders as necessary evils, to call upon when disputes arise about their private (as they imagine) rights. The bravery and steadiness of the constable is beyond all praise, and he was well supported by the sub-constables of the party. I beg to recommend them to the favourable notice of the Inspector General. I will escort Cosheen and Hulan to Bruff to-morrow. A further search on an extensive scale will be made this night, in the hope of meeting with some of the fellows, who must have been wounded."

This was signed by Mr. T. O'Connell, Sub-Inspector of Constabulary. I have read these documents, my Lords, to show the extent to which the illegal acts of these men are carried; and I think such of your Lordships as have done me the honour to attend to the details I have submitted, will have remarked that the great proportion of these crimes are committed by bands of armed men—of men who, as it is generally believed, belong to secret associations, bound to each other by oaths, and banded together for the purpose of intimidating the well-disposed and peaceable inhabitants. In the list I have read, out of the 137 homicides, and the large number of aggravated assaults, your Lordships will have perceived that five only were committed on the persons of gentlemen. I am far from saying that the position of a gentleman is enviable, who, from a sense of duty, remains at his post in a disturbed district, and performs the obligations of a magistrate and a resident landowner; but still his position is a safe and secure one compared with that of the small farmer and cottier. In a sense, it may be said that "his house is his castle;" it is capable of being defended; he and his servants are armed, and he runs comparatively little risk from the inroads of these bands; in fact, those by whom these descriptions of crimes are committed, dare not venture to make an attack. But your Lordships may imagine what is the position of the unfortunate small farmer or cottier—the man who has, perhaps, been fifteen or twenty years in possession of a particular spot, or is employed by a particular person who is obnoxious to these depredators, and who receives a threatening letter. If he obeys the mandate, he sentences himself and family to all but certain ruin; there is no other farm open to him; and he has no alternative, if he leave his holding, but to become an outcast and a wanderer. He has no means, in fact, of obtaining a living for himself and those who are dependent upon him. He is compelled, therefore, to brave the danger and remain. And now, my Lords, mark the consequences! In the dead and silent hour of the night, the fragile door of his cottage is burst open; a band of armed and disguised ruffians rush in, drag him from his bed, and, before the eyes of his trembling wife and children, either murder him outright, or so mutilate him that his life afterwards become a burden. My Lords, in what I have stated I have not said one word which is not fully borne out by the facts I have detailed. The unfortunate man who is the victim of these outrages is either killed on the spot, or is left, if he survives, to drag out a miserable existence, incapable of labour for the rest of his life, or, at all events, for a long time; and yet neither the man himself, if he survive, nor his family who witness the perpetration of the crime, can be induced to come forward to give evidence for the purpose of bringing the perpetrators to justice. I say, then, my Lords, that this measure is necessary and essential for the protection of the lives and limbs of the people. As I have said, the rich man is comparatively safe; but, as the law stands, it affords no protection to the poor man—or at least a most inadequate and inefficient protection—though no means have been left untried by Her Majesty's Government to give full effect to the existing law for that purpose. This, I shall now proceed to show. I have a Return showing the amount of the Constabulary Force in Ireland now as compared with what was in the year 1845:—

Counties.	Number of Police Constables in 1835.	Present Number.
County Cavan.....	169	400
Monaghan	110	181
King's County.....	272	319
Longford	140	191
Westmeath	272	282
Clare	343	343
Leitrim	170	311
Roscommon	250	459
Limerick	250	621
Tipperary {North	315	564
Tipperary {South	371	466

This, too, is independent of the various military parties stationed there. A considerable addition has also been made in the number of the stipendiary magistrates. But notwithstanding these measures, so great is the evil at this time, that Her Majesty's Government feel it their duty to come to Parliament for the purpose of being armed with extraordinary powers, to secure that protection to life in Ireland, and to give to the well-disposed and peaceable inhabitants of that country that security which alone makes life a source of enjoyment. Memorials from the Grand Juries of every one of the disturbed counties, representing the inadequacy of the existing law to repress these outrages, have been laid before the Government. I hold in my hand those from Roscommon, Leitrim, and Tipperary. I think, assuming that it be the intention of Parliament effectually to cope with this evil, which has now grown to such a fearful extent, and that you agree with me that it is necessary to arm the Government with extraordinary powers for that purpose, that you will, on consideration, find it would be impossible to adopt a measure, violating in a less degree the principles of the Constitution, than that which I have had the honour to submit. In the first place, the Bill provides that it shall be lawful for the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, with the assent of Her Majesty's Privy Council, to declare by proclamation, that any county or any part of any county in which any of the offences aforesaid shall have been committed, requires an additional establishment of police, and thereupon it shall be lawful to appoint such and so many resident magistrates, sub-inspectors of constabulary, and constables, as he shall think proper, the expense to be borne wholly by the district. There is another clause of great importance—the introduction of which into any Bill can only be justified by the necessity of the case ; I mean that which empowers the Lord Lieutenant to warn the inhabitants of the district so proclaimed to be and remain within their respective places of abode at all hours between sunset and sunrise. Your Lordships are aware, that in the course of the system of crime in Ireland, the poor and humble have generally been made the victims, and that the outrages have been almost wholly committed in the night: these bands of armed ruffians do not generally patrol the country except at night, and we have every reason to believe that these crimes are deliberated and decided upon by persons frequenting low public houses and other similar places during the night: therefore, I consider, and I hope your Lordships will agree with me, that, under the peculiar circumstances, the power which this clause gives is essential to be vested in the hands of the Executive Government; but although the power is extraordinary, it will always be competent to revoke it when the necessity for it ceases to exist. Another clause empowers the Lord Lieutenant to offer rewards for the apprehension of offenders; and the next provision is, that which enables the Lord Lieutenant to assign and direct the payment of such sums of money as to him shall seem reasonable, as—you can hardly call it compensation; [Lord CAMPBELL: *Solatium;*]—for what can compensate for such a loss? but—to the personal representative, wife, parent, child, or relative of the person who has been murdered or permanently maimed. With regard to the destruction of property, there is already a remedy, the hundred in which the offence is committed being liable for the damage; the Bill in this respect, therefore, carries the law a little further than it goes at present, and it certainly appears to me that it should be in the power of the Executive Government to charge, by way of fine upon the district, the money necessary to relieve and maintain the family which has, by these outrages been deprived of its head. These are the most important of the provisions of the Bill. Your Lordships, I have no doubt, will agree with me that it would be inconvenient now to enter upon any discussion of the details. I may, however, add, that in all cases the rate is to be levied on the poor-law valuation, and that no individual, however small may be his holding, will be exempt, and that it is not intended in any case that the party who is made liable to the payment should have the power to deduct the money so levied from the rent due to the landlord. Another clause, the object of which is to prevent persons congregating in public-houses, and other places, licensed or unlicensed, in which beer or spirituous liquors are sold, between sunset and sunrise, authorizes any justice of the peace, or other person authorized thereto by his warrant, to search such places and apprehend any persons who may be found congregated therein, and bring them to punishment. The offence for so congregating is by another clause made a misdemeanour, to be tried either at the quarter-sessions or the assizes; as is also that of knowingly keeping fire-arms

in any house in a disturbed district without being duly authorized. Your Lordships will perceive, then, that trial by jury is preserved in all cases, and that the ancient and constitutional mode of carrying on the prosecutions which may be instituted under this Act will in no way be altered. There is another clause introduced for the purpose of securing from intimidation persons who may be called upon to give evidence against those who may be prosecuted under this Bill, and which declares that any person injuring the person or property of any witness, or who shall by threats, menaces, or otherwise, deter or intimidate any witness, prosecutor, or juror from discharging his or her duty, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanour. I think, my Lords, it is scarcely necessary for me on this occasion to say more as to the details of the Bill. Other opportunities will be afforded for that purpose, when any objections that may occur on the part of any noble Lord may be stated; and it will be my desire, and that of Her Majesty's Government, to give them the fullest consideration. I am aware that, with regard to the original causes by which these crimes have been produced, many and conflicting opinions may be entertained. Some conceive, I know, that these crimes are attributable to defective political institutions; but, my Lords, I submit that the facts I have stated afford a sufficient demonstration of the utter futility of that opinion. I have already shown that in eighteen counties of Ireland crime has actually diminished; and if the state of crime in Ireland is the result of political grievance, why is not the same effect apparent in all? Be the grievance great, or be it small—be it real or be it imaginary, it must exist in the same force and to the same extent in Wexford as in Limerick—in Kilkenny as in Roscommon—in Westmeath as in Tipperary. It cannot fairly be said that these outrages by which particular districts are distracted — outrages which do not partake of an insurrectionary character, and are not in any way directed against the authorities of the country, but against individuals (mostly of the poorer orders), who for some cause or other have incurred the vengeance of those by whom they are perpetrated, are occasioned by political grievance. It does not appear to me, however, that it would be a necessary or convenient course at this time to enter on the discussion of this the political question, though I may be allowed to say that Her Majesty's Government have not given any light or insufficient proof of their desire to consider and remove any just cause of dissatisfaction that may exist in regard to political grievances. My Lords, if I were to advert to the various measures Her Majesty's Government have already brought forward, to those which they may now have in contemplation, or to the measures which other Members of this or the other House of Parliament may be disposed to recommend as remedial measures, I should be diverting your Lordships' attention from the subject now immediately under your consideration, and possibly be calling forth a difference of opinion which would not tend to forward the discussion or further the object we have at present in view. I will, therefore, with your Lordships' permission, pass on to other matters, offering, by the way, this one observation only—that I shall be prepared on all fitting occasions, as will my Colleagues, to declare our opinions and defend the policy of Her Majesty's present Government in Ireland. Of this we are convinced, that no measure of improvement, whether political or social, will ever be effectual in improving the condition of Ireland or its people until you have put down this system of terror and intimidation. Many of these outrages are, no doubt, of an agrarian character, that is to say, they arise out of the tenure and mode of occupying land in Ireland: I think this is sufficiently established by the extracts I have read. Many remote causes may be found for the existing state of things. Formerly it was the practice of the landlords to let their land upon long leases at low rents; since then, however, this land has, in many cases, fallen into the hands of middlemen, who subdivide it and extort high rents; the system of conacre is carried on to a great extent, and the subdivisions of land, for the purpose of making 40*s.* freeholders, has also been acted upon largely in many parts of the country. All these circumstances have tended to produce the evils we now deplore; but at this moment, I believe the chief cause of the evils that prevail in Ireland are to be traced to the existence of those secret and illegal associations which are used for the purpose of alarming and terrifying the population, and preventing their looking to the magistrates and the laws for protection against the system of coercion to which they are subjected, and which, by acting upon their fears, prevents their offering any resistance to the threat-

ening and anonymous notices by which they are assailed. Believing that your Lordships will agree with me that it is absolutely necessary to meet this evil by some effectual check, I call upon you to give your sanction to this measure, and when it shall (as I hope and believe it will) have effected its purpose, and enabled the Executive Government of Ireland to put an end to the present state of terror and intimidation, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have afforded to the people of Ireland that feeling of security which in England every peasant enjoys—and we may then hope for the full benefits of those measures in which the Government have been engaged for the good of Ireland, and which, on the proposition of the Government, Parliament has already sanctioned. Your Lordships are, no doubt, aware, that under existing acts, or by Bills proposed in the course of the present Session, a sum of no less than 448,000*l.* in grants and loans will have been voted or appropriated for the purpose of being now employed on piers and harbours and other public works. In the course of last Session no fewer than thirteen Railway Bills were passed, involving, with one passed in the preceding Session, an expenditure of nearly 9,000,000*l.*, and this will be applied in the most desirable mode, that of giving employment to the labourers of Ireland. But it is impossible that these measures should bear the fruit which we hope and trust they will produce, unless you give security to the capitalist about to embark his capital in that country, and to the labourers about to be employed by him, in carrying out the measures which you pass. I earnestly trust—it is my hope and my prayer—that the day is not far distant when it may be in the power of the Government to propose to Parliament to repeal this Act, and to abandon measures which the circumstances of the country no longer render necessary. I move your Lordships that this Bill be now read a second time.

The MARQUESS of LANSDOWNE said, that after the very clear, full, and able statement of the noble Earl, which, in many respects, he was sure must have been as painful to him to make, as it was for their Lordships to hear, he did not rise for the purpose of offering the slightest opposition to the second reading of a Bill which he had no doubt was intended, as on the face of it it purported to be, for the preservation of the lives of Her Majesty's subjects in many parts of Ireland: and so far was he from complaining of the noble Lord, or of the Government whom he represented on that occasion, for bringing forward the measure at so early a period of the Session, that he was ready to admit, that after the declaration of Her Majesty in Her Speech from the Throne—a declaration which was unhappily warranted by facts known to many of their Lordships, and still more warranted by facts known to the Government, and which had been stated by the noble Lord that night—every day after that declaration was, he thought, a day lost, in which an effectual remedy was not at least attempted to put an end to a state of society so horrible, so destructive, and so calculated to impede all advancement and all improvement in the country. It was, therefore, the duty of Government to call the attention of the House, at the earliest possible moment, to this most important subject. In saying this, however, he was anxious not to be understood to admit, and he hoped the noble Lord would not contend, that the Government were, by this necessity, relieved of the duty of considering what other measures—measures of a more satisfactory character, and which would accord better with their Lordships' feelings to adopt—should be proposed for the immediate amelioration and benefit of society in Ireland. But he so far agreed with the noble Earl, that he did consider, however expedient it might be for their Lordships, whether invited by the Government or not, to enter into the consideration at a future, and, he trusted, not far distant period, of measures calculated to give more universal satisfaction to that country than, perhaps, it was possible to expect that this Bill—necessary and urgent as he admitted it to be—could give; that they would be prepared to enter into the consideration of this Bill at the earliest possible period. He quite agreed with the noble Earl, that between this measure and measures of amelioration, there was no necessary connexion. There was, indeed, this much connexion, that, for the purpose of entertaining and accomplishing any measures intended to be conducive to the prosperity of Ireland, the measure which had just been introduced by the noble Earl must be the necessary precursor. He would ask any of their Lordships, anxious as he knew them all to be to see the condition of Ireland improved, and who wished to see measures with that view pressed on the early consideration of

the Legislature, could they imagine any measure which would be attended with any beneficial result, if the system against which the present Bill was directed, had not been previously and completely removed? Of what use would measures be, intended for the benefit of Ireland — measures calculated to stimulate industry, or to extend local improvements; or, if their Lordships would have it, measures conferring additional privileges on the people— of what use would such measures be, if, as had been shown by the cases produced by the noble Earl, and as was well known to many of their Lordships, no man in Ireland could avail himself of their provisions without finding his industry or his enterprise arrested by the hand of the assassin? As things at present stood, no man would be permitted to practise the labour which it was the object of the Legislature to provide, without finding the exercise of that labour a crime in the eyes of those midnight legislators who presume to tell the poor man that his labour was not his property, but was to be exercised by their permission, and with no other sanction than that which might be derived from their midnight deliberations. But even if political privileges were to be extended—if the people were to be enabled to vote where they had not voted before—if they were to be permitted to take part in the municipal and deliberative business of their country— of what use would such privileges be, if there was a secret legislature behind, to dictate to them how their franchise was to be exercised, and inflicting on him the severest penalties of that unknown law which hung over him, if he presumed to exercise his privilege in the manner which he conceived most conducive to his own interests, and in accordance with his own feelings? He, therefore, felt fully justified in admitting that the present Bill was a Bill for the protection of the poor. The noble Earl had truly stated that, aimed as this species of crime was at every improvement, and at every state almost of society in which improvement could exist, the personal effects of this illicit law fell not so much on the rich man, who could guard himself against the consequences, and withdraw from the scene which was afflicted by this dire and systematic species of crime, as on the labouring man; who, answering to the call of the Legislature, which told him to improve, and to the call of his landlord, who, it was to be hoped, encouraged improvement, was, on the other hand, deterred by these lawless associations, and would be deterred until this system was put down by the law. Unless it was stopped, it would extend from one county to another, and proceed throughout the land, and the consequences would be death, insecurity, famine, and the absence of capital (which would be repelled from Ireland to the countries whence it had come), the destruction of the mass of the population by the absence of everything like law, order, and security in the country. For these reasons he felt that he should be ill doing his duty to Ireland and their Lordships, if he did not express his concurrence in the necessity of passing such a Bill as the noble Earl had introduced; but, at the same time, he must reserve to himself the right, though he would not enter into the subject at present, of urging the Government at a future and no distant period, or of urging their Lordships, if the conduct of the Government should render it necessary, to endeavour by other measures to ameliorate the condition of the people of Ireland. These, he admitted, would require caution; but he trusted that the Government were, in a great degree, prepared with them, and that no unnecessary delay would occur in bringing them forward. In the meantime, he thought that their Lordships would do right, if possible, to pass the present Bill; and he could only say that, with no unnecessary delay, he wished it to have all that consideration which the nature of all measures affecting the liberty and independence of the subject always obtained from their Lordships. Into the particular provisions of the Bill it was not his wish to enter at present; he trusted that they would be carefully considered, though he would not pledge himself as to any particular details. With respect to that provision which cast on the locality (and the smallest space possible, he hoped, for the purpose of making it more effectual) all the consequences of crime, in the shape of penalty, he must say that he thought that it would have a most advantageous effect.

Lord BROUGHAM said, he so entirely concurred with his noble Friend who had just sat down in thinking that the measure ought not to be delayed for even the very smallest portion of time, which was not absolutely necessary for well considering the provisions of the Act, that he did not mean to act counter to the course of his noble Friend by offering any lengthened observations upon the Bill, reserving any comments which he might have to make for

a future stage. He heartily deplored that such a state of things as that which had been described should exist in any part of the British dominions, but especially in so large a portion, and a portion so nearly situated to ourselves as Ireland—a state of things, topical, he would fain hope, and confined to particular districts; but a condition of society, nevertheless, which, if allowed to continue, and which, if they did not meet by the most vigorous and efficacious measures, it was in vain they might look for the improvement of Ireland, or an amelioration of the condition of her people. But if it were vain to look to the social improvement of Ireland in such circumstances, to look for her legislative improvement under such a state of anarchy was still more vain. Their first and paramount duty, with reference to it, was, in plain and short terms, to make Ireland a habitable country, in order that they might improve her condition. At present Ireland was not a habitable country. He had heard the details which were given in the speech of the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland with pain; he could not say it surprised him any more than those amongst their Lordships who were, like him, cognizant of the general features of the case, although they might not have been previously acquainted with its hideous details as they now were. They had heard those details from the noble Earl; and he was confident that, having heard them, their Lordships would agree with him that it was impossible to say certain districts in Ireland were not become uninhabitable for the peaceable and quiet subjects of the Crown. Their first duty, then, was to prevent the further growth and progress of crime in those districts; to put an end to a system under which all law was set at defiance in that country, and which had reduced portions of it to such a state that the denizens whom we had planted in the islands of the South Sea might consider that they occupied, by comparison, a far more enviable country. He lamented that the Bill before them was not accompanied by a measure which, in his deliberate opinion, would be found to be highly advantageous, and which he introduced, not yesterday to their Lordships, but in a Bill which he brought forward two years ago, and which he had been induced to withdraw by a noble Duke opposite, the expression of whose wish on such a subject operated upon him (Lord Brougham) as a command. The provision to which he alluded was one that would have the effect of rendering it possible to obtain convictions for crimes, by allowing the trial to come on in a distant part of the country from the spot where the crime was committed, when such a course was necessary, and where the jury who tried the case, and the witnesses who gave evidence, would not be subjected to the shot of the assassin, for the mere performance of their judicial duties. He did not think that the measure to which he alluded was one that should necessarily be confined to Ireland; and if it appearod less invidious that it should not be so, and that it should be general instead of particular, he would, without hesitation, consent to its general application; and he believed he had the authority of some of the most eminent lawyers of this country, and men of the soundest constitutional principles, of the chief criminal Judge certainly, at his side in that view—namely, in thinking that a power ought to be given in certain cases, at the option of the prosecutor, of trying a prisoner in a different county from that in which the offence was committed—in the capitals of Dublin or London, if necessary. That had been already done in England, when smugglers could not otherwise be convicted: all revenue cases were tried in London, wherever the offences were charged to have been committed; and it had been the custom in Scotland, time out of mind, to admit of such a course; all offences whatever being triable in Edinburgh as well as in the county where alleged. There could be no greater delusion in general than to suppose that a prisoner obtained an advantage by being tried in a part of the country where he was well known. In nine cases out of ten, it would be better for the prisoner to be tried at a distance, and in ten cases it would be better for justice that such a course were adopted. A jury with their minds impregnated with all the reports and all the gossip of the neighbourhood, did not form the most favourable tribunal for a prisoner any more than for public justice. The old law required a trial in the vicinage; but it was only because the jury were to find a verdict on their own private knowledge. This barbarous practice had long ceased to prevail; and with it had ceased the other consequential practice of summoning juries from the hundred, that is, the neighbourhood. He was glad the Government had brought forward the measure which had been described in detail by the noble Earl; but he felt convinced that, in order to

make it effectual, it ought to be accompanied with the measure which he had described.

LORD FARNHAM said, that as one who had been for many months recently resident in Ireland, he felt called upon to address a few observations to their Lordships. If he had been asked fourteen months ago which was the most quiet and the best conducted county in Ireland, he would have answered with pride, his own county of Cavan; but a great change had since taken place, he regretted to say, in that county. That change for the worse he dated from the murder of his lamented friend Captain Macleod. At the commencement of the last year, meetings were held in Cavan of a private and illegal nature; threatening notices were served on farmers and labourers; and these were followed by attacks on private houses; the sufferers being principally persons, so far as he could ascertain, of the lowest class in society—the attacks being generally committed for the purpose of taking arms. In the course of the spring a respectable person named James Gallagher, who was an under-agent or bailiff to Mr. Enery, was murdered, in the broad daylight, in the town of Ballyconnell; and no attempt appeared to have been made to prevent the escape of the murderer. In consequence of this disturbed state of the county, he felt it his duty to return home and to use his exertions in concert with the other magistrates, for the restoration of tranquillity. On his arrival at Dublin, the first thing he heard was, that on the day (Sunday) preceding, and on his return from church with two of his young children, a near neighbour of his own, Mr. Bell Booth, had been brutally murdered. There was one circumstance connected with that murder which he ought not to omit to mention, as throwing a light on the state in which the country was at that period. Numbers of persons were present on the occasion of the murder, or close at hand; and notwithstanding that they were so, no attempt was made to arrest the murderer, although he did not fly, but walked deliberately away from the spot after he had committed the deed. Another fact to which he felt it necessary to allude, and which was well worth the attention of their Lordships, was, that the murderer of Mr. Booth had been ever since in the country, and that the houses he visited daily were well known; but that up to that moment he had not been arrested. He (Lord Farnham) arrived in the county of Cavan on the day after Mr. Booth's funeral. The cause of that gentleman's murder had never been ascertained. He was a gentleman of small property, the whole of which he farmed himself; and his assassination was attributable to no rancorous party feeling, for he had not been a member of the Orange society for the last ten years. Indeed, Mr. Booth rendered him (Lord Farnham) most strenuous assistance in endeavouring to effect the dissolution of the Orange lodges in 1836; and on every occasion since, when he had felt it his duty, on public grounds, to endeavour to prevent party processions, Mr. Bell Booth had most actively co-operated with him in effecting that object. On his (Lord Farnham's) arrival in Cavan he found the public mind in a state of the greatest excitement. Matters had unfortunately begun to assume the appearance of a religious conflict. Mr. Bell Booth was a Protestant, and was very much respected by all the Protestants of the county. He had also formerly been an Orangeman; he was beloved by all the members of that body; and his funeral was attended by thousands of armed Protestants. Thousands of Roman Catholics also assembled, in arms, in various parts of the same portion of the county, and a religious collision was anticipated. The town of Killeshandra was for two days in the possession of the Roman Catholic party. This event occurred a few days before the 1st of July—one of the usual Orange anniversaries—and this circumstance increased the danger. He (Lord Farnham) and other magistrates obtained, however, the most solemn assurance that all individuals who were masters of Orange lodges in the county, would endeavour, as far as they could, to prevent the celebration of that anniversary by proceeding in processions; and he had the satisfaction to state that, with two exceptions, that promise was most faithfully kept. He fully agreed in the statement of the noble Marquess opposite, that the Bill now before them was a measure for the protection of the poor; for although landlords and men of property in Ireland who fulfilled their duties, and practically acknowledged that property had its duties as well as its rights, were threatened and their property destroyed, yet they were in a very different position from the farmers and persons in a lower rank of life; for, if they had reason to apprehend personal injury, they might, though poosibly at great inconvenience, quit the country—a course which the poor man was unable to take. In the county of

Cavan the farmers almost invariably held but small portions of land—they called a holding of twenty acres a large farm. It was evident that a man situated as one of these farmers could not go away when he pleased. A man in such circumstances must sell his furniture and stock, if he wished to leave the country, in order to provide means for doing so. But who was to buy them? Who would dare to purchase them? Any individual who did purchase under such circumstances, would place his life in the greatest jeopardy. He believed that the state of things now existing in Ireland might be traced to the Ribbon societies—associations of the most dangerous character. If any man wished to attack another, those societies would furnish him with the means of effecting his object in every possible way. Those who lived in Ireland were well acquainted with the nature of those associations, though perhaps many noble Lords might not be aware of their constitution and objects. He might, however, be allowed to read the opinions of a noble and learned Friend of his, which, he was sure, would have considerable weight with their Lordships. The noble Lord read a long extract from a charge of Lord Plunket, in which that noble and learned Lord said—

"It was most satisfactory to him that no person of any consequence or consideration had been discovered to be connected with the Riband societies; but that they consisted only of men in the humblest classes of society—persons who, while they confined themselves to their proper stations, were entitled to the protection of the law, and were useful and respectable members of the community; but who possessed neither the taste nor the information necessary to qualify them for the conduct of political affairs. When such men madly rushed beyond that boundary which Providence in its wisdom had assigned them, they were utterly incapable of rendering service to their country, though they were unfortunately quite equal to the task of disturbing its peace and endangering its institutions."

Lord Plunket then referred to the objects of the Ribbon societies, and after enumerating some of them, observed, that there was nothing revolting to the feelings of human nature to which persons once linked in illegal societies were not liable to lend themselves; and concluded by stating, that it was their duty to those blind and deluded persons to expose their insane attempts, while it was still more important to society at large to prevent the evil from spreading through the heart of the country, and infecting the mass of the population with a relish for mischief and insubordination. Addresses had been presented to the Lord Lieutenant from numerous counties in Ireland, relative to the disturbed state of the various districts; and these addresses invariably set forth the fact that the laws of the land were insufficient to meet the evil. He was glad, therefore, that the Government had brought forward this measure, and he would give it his most cordial assent, for he thought it calculated to give security to life and property in Ireland, which at present were not secure.

The MARQUESS of CLANRICARDE would give the same vote on the present measure as the noble Lord who had just sat down. He should not, indeed, have deemed it necessary to address their Lordships on the subject at this stage of the Bill, if the observations made by himself and his noble Friend near him, on a former occasion, had not been made the subject of comment out of doors, and had not he and other noble Lords been made the subject of gross calumny and abuse, because they merely called upon the Government to interfere, and to take some measures for protecting life and property in Ireland. He considered that the Government were bringing forward the present measure on their own responsibility—on their own statement that the law as it stood in Ireland, was insufficient to protect the peaceable inhabitants of that country. If such was the fact, he would give the Bill his ready assent. He did not understand that by passing such a measure the Legislature meant to preclude all inquiry into the evils which affected Ireland, nor that it would stop the endeavours made by the present or any future Ministry to devise means for remedying those evils, but, on the contrary, that it would promote and assist them. The Bill, therefore, in his view, had no connexion with any other measures which might have been in view for promoting the good of Ireland, and he was extremly sorry if anything he had said on a former occasion of this kind had given offence to those who had thought it worth while to notice what had fallen from him. If, however, he had had the misfortune to differ from the great arbiter of the people in Ireland, he had done so in exercise of his own right, and acting upon his own judgment. The individual to whom he referred stated that the Irish people demanded equality in religion, equality in political rights, and equality in social matters. He (Lord Clanricarde) might also think that the people of Ireland were entitled to these privileges; but that

question had nothing to do with the Bill before their Lordships. Could anything, for instance, be more absurd than to allege such reasons for refusing to pass the measure? According to that reasoning, the Irish farmer might tell them, "I do not possess that franchise to which I am entitled;" and their Lordships were supposed to turn round, and say, "No, we know you don't, and we will take care you shall be still worse off." But the farmer might then say, "If you do not give me those equal rights, at all events protect my life and property, and enable me to follow my calling honestly and securely." To which their Lordships were supposed to reply, "No; because you have not the franchise, you shall not have protection; because you have not those rights to which you think you are entitled, your property shall be exposed, and your life endangered." If the ordinary law was not sufficiently strong to insure tranquillity in Ireland, certainly such a measure as this was necessary before any man in the disturbed districts of that country could venture to exercise these constitutional rights which it was alleged he ought to enjoy. There were, however, some parts of this Bill in which he did not concur. For instance, he understood that this measure was intended to be the permanent law of the country—to such a course he decidedly objected. The noble Earl who introduced the Bill had told them that he hoped at an early period Government would be enabled to call upon Parliament to repeal the measure. Now, he thought it would be far better to limit the operation of the Bill. He should despair of the tranquillity of Ireland if he thought such a measure was always to be in force, for it conferred most arbitrary powers. He did not object to those powers being granted: all that he stipulated was, that they should be given for a stated time. Fix their duration to a certain period, and then if necessary call upon Parliament to renew them. He had also another objection to the provisions of the Bill—namely, to the mode of punishing districts by fines and mulcts. He agreed with noble Lords who had spoken on his own side of the House, that it was most just that some punishment should fall upon those who were indirectly, if not directly, parties to the commission of the grave crimes now perpetrated; and he considered it right that some fine should be imposed on those districts where the crimes were committed. He thought, however, that there ought to be some relaxation of this punishment where a conviction took place. A lunatic, for instance, might take away a life, or even commit several murders; he would be convicted immediately; but it would be excessively hard that a quiet district, where no combination existed, and where none of the crimes against which this Bill was directed had been committed, should be saddled with compensation in the way of a pension, or a sum of money to the widow or relatives of the deceased. But he would go still further, and would take the case even of a deliberate murder, such as those which had been referred to to-night. Now if, in such a case, the inhabitants of the place rose, detected the criminal, and dragged him to condign punishment, they certainly ought not to be subjected to the penalty which would have been imposed upon them if they had connived at the crime, or at the escape of the offender. It had been proved, over and over again, that this class of offences in Ireland was generally committed by strangers; but he thought that if the people of the district where a crime of this nature was committed gave such information, or used such exertions, as brought the offender to justice, the fine contemplated by this measure ouught not to be enforced. He considered, also, that the punishment of transportation was rather too lightly dealt with in this measure. He thought no man ought to be transported—certainly not sentenced to transportation for life—without the approval of the Lord Lieutenant, after the crime and its punishment had been under the consideration of the Irish Government. He fully agreed in the remarks of his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) as to the change of venue; and he concurred in the correctness of the noble and learned Lord's observation, that it was often a disadvantage to a man to be tried in his own immediate neighbourhood; for, if a man of bad character—although he might not be guilty of the offence with which he was charged—he might be convicted, while by an impartial jury he would probably have been acquitted. These were, however, matters of detail, which might be considered hereafter. He certainly would not oppose the Bill in its present stage, for he considered a great necessity existed for such a measure. Although he considered that the Government had been tardy in doing their duty, and in protecting life and property in Ireland, he would not on this occasion withhold from them his support.

The EARL of WICKLOW would support the Bill. Its object was to prevent crime; and he thought it well framed for that purpose. There was another object which the Bill did not touch, namely, that of bringing to justice the perpetrators of the outrages committed in Ireland. He thought it just as necessary to devise means for securing the perpetrators of crime as to prevent its commission. As long as trials of criminals continued to be conducted in Ireland as they now were, there was no chance of convicting the guilty parties. In the Coercion Bill of Earl Grey's Government both of these two most essential objects were provided for: not only was crime prevented, but the real criminals were convicted and punished. He hoped the Government would turn its attention to this important subject, and if, by the introduction of some clauses into the present Bill, it could be attained, so much the better; if not, there ought to be a Bill brought in for that special purpose, as it is was the most desirable object that could achieved.

The EARL of CLANCARTY: My Lords, my noble Friend the noble Marquis opposite, who so strongly objects to the power which it is proposed in the Bill to give to magistrates of sentencing to transportation persons convicted of misdemeanours under this Act, seems to forget that magistrates already exercise, at quarter-sessions, a like power for the punishment of offences of a much more venial character than those which have called for the enactment of this Bill. Fully concurring in the necessity of some such measure, I would wish to take the present opportunity of calling the attention of Her Majesty's Government to some of its provisions. The Bill purports to be an Act not only for the better protection of life, but also to facilitate the apprehension and detection of offenders; and for this purpose the first Clause of the Bill confers a power upon the Lord Lieutenant to proclaim any district where a murder shall have been committed or attempted, and to send into it as many stipendiary magistrates and additional constables as he shall think proper. Now, my Lords, however useful in a case of open insurrection such a power might be, I must say it does not appear to me to be a provision exactly the best suited to facilitate the detection and apprehension of the guilty parties who may have committed or attempted to commit a murder. This object I should have thought might be better promoted by giving to magistrates a greater power than they at present possess, of compelling persons to give evidence. Many of your Lordships may not be aware, that although a magistrate could name twenty different persons who could give evidence, and by their evidence convict a murderer, he has no power of calling upon them to give evidence, unless against some one already charged with the offence. An amendment of the law in this respect might be of great value. Then with respect to the functionaries whom the Lord Lieutenant is to send into the proclaimed districts, I should think that local knowledge rather than numbers would, whether in regard of the magistrates or of the police who are to act under their orders, be the more important consideration. Moreover these stipendiary, or as they are termed in the Bill "resident" magistrates; (why called "resident" it is not very easy to understand, inasmuch as they are liable to be continually moved from place to place;) but these so-called resident magistrates, unless they are to be a permanent burden upon the country (which God forbid!) would, it appears to me, feel it their interest rather to prolong than to put an end to that state of things which occasioned their appointment: their interest would be clearly opposed to their duty. Surely, in such an emergency, it would be more advantageous to rely upon the unpaid magistracy. These could and would, without remuneration or other reward than what they would look for in the restoration of peace and security to the country, act, if called upon, much more efficiently than could any police magistrate necessarily possessed of less knowledge of the district, less interested in its well-being, and of less consideration among its inhabitants. If the police were placed duly in relation with them, none could have so much access to information as the local magistracy; for to none would secret information be so freely afforded as to a resident country gentleman, if looked upon as the accredited officer of the Government for preserving the peace of the country. I do not allude, my Lords, to that hateful species of information—hateful and revolting beyond all things to the feelings of Irishmen—by which a man, for pecuniary reward, betrays his partner in guilt; but I allude to that kind of information which, without any betrayal of confidence, a poor man might, from a sense of duty and of a mutual interest, impart to his landlord, who, as a

magistrate, with the police under his orders, might turn it to account for the prevention—an object in my mind of much greater importance than the punishment—of crime. My views of the greater efficiency of the local than of the paid magistracy, is, I think, justified by the fact, that at no period prior to the institution of the stipendiary magistracy, was the country in so disgraceful and lawless a state as it has since been. Your Lordships have this evening heard from the noble Earl who opened this debate, a catalogue of crime committed within the last year in Ireland, unexampled in number and atrocity at any anterior period, or in any other country; and you have heard the noble Earl compare it with the previous year, as with one of comparative peace and security. Let me ask your Lordships whether the best of these two periods was not such as any Government should take shame to acknowledge. Look also at the official lists of rewards offered for the apprehension and conviction of offenders, and the remarkable paucity of instances in which the law has been vindicated, and all this, notwithstanding a greatly increased expense in the administration of justice, and a police force twice as numerous, much better disciplined, and much more expensive to the country than formerly. I think from these facts it may at leat be questioned, whether the law is better upheld by a paid than by an unpaid magistracy. And consider, my Lords, that the circumstances of the country are in this respect changed; that the penal Statutes on account of religious opinions have been repealed; that Protestants and Roman Catholics enjoy equal civil rights; that there is no longer a struggle for privileges, the privation of which, however it may have been justified in former times, had become a ground, and I must add a very sufficient ground, of discontent. And further, consider that since the Act of 1829, we have now had seventeen years of the policy of conciliation—of continual concessions made for the purpose of giving contentment to the majority of the Irish people; and so far in aid of the civil magistrate for the preservation of the peace. Not to mention the Reform Bill, there have been Protestant municipal corporations abolished, tithes extinguished, and a rent-charge payable in lieu of them by the landlords; vestry cess swept away altogether; all public money withdrawn from the support of Protestant schools under the clergy, and transferred to the support of schools approved of by the Roman Catholic clergy; the Protestant Church cut down, and a legal recognition given to the foundation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland; and, though last, not least, Maynooth enlarged, endowed, and perpetuated, upon the nation. My Lords, I certainly do not consider that these concessions were either wise or expedient, even in reference to any temporary object. Many of them were utterly unjustifiable, but they at least indicated the disposition that existed in the Government to give to those said said officers to whom they confided the preservation of the peace, a degree of support that never was given in former years to the local magistracy. Earnestly would I press upon Her Majesty's Government the expediency of recurring to the local magistracy. And I do so, I beg to be understood, without meaning to convey the slightest imputation upon the paid magistrates: they are, I believe, in general, a very respectable, laborious, and deserving body, although for the reasons I have suggested, less efficient than many of the local magistrates. And, in some districts where there are no resident gentry fit to be entrusted with the commission of the peace, stipendiary magistrates would always be required. But looking at the general interests of the country, at the importance of casting upon the upper classes of society the performance of public duties, and of accustoming the occupiers of the soil to look upon their landlords not as mere proprietors, but as persons charged with duties and responsibilities, in which they, the occupiers, have a direct interest, I think the suggestion I have thrown out is not undeserving of the consideration of the Government. The next provision of the Bill to which I would call your Lordships' attention is that contained in the 7th Clause: it empowers the Lord Lieutenant to make compensation to the personal representative, wife, parent, child, or other relative, of any person who shall be murdered within any proclaimed district; but it would appear from the terms of this clause, that the relatives of the person whose murder was the immediate occasion of the district being proclaimed, are excluded from the benefit of that provision. This, I think, would be manifestly an injustice; and I hope the noble Earl who has charge of the Bill, will consider of the propriety of making such alterations in the wording of the clause as will secure a like rule of compensation in both cases. The last provision of the Bill that I will at

present notice is that contained in the 9th Clause, which provides the source from whence the advances made from the Consolidated Fund, under this Act, are to be repaid, viz. the poor rate. Now, I must entreat of the noble Earl to consider that the poor rate is already a very unpopular tax, and that to make it the medium of inflicting a penalty upon a district, would, therefore, be an act most impolitic, and add immeasurably to the danger that already attends the collection of the rate, and to the difficulty of poor-law administration in Ireland. I will not anticipate the result of the inquiry now proceeding into the operation of the Poor Law; but I will, without hesitation, say, that if the poor rate, instead of being turned to the account proposed in this Bill, were applied solely but fully to its legitimate purpose, of relieving the country from a vagrant and mendicant population, it would do much more to remedy the present state of crime in Ireland than would the Bill under your consideration; and I am decidedly of opinion that had the Poor Relief Act been duly carried out, and the masses of the population relieved from the pressure of destitution which leads so much to demoralize, alike by the effect of want, and by the contamination of bad associates, much of that crime which has called for this Bill might have been prevented. But so long as you have infesting the country a number of persons without any stake, without any interest in upholding the law, having nothing to lose and every thing to gain by its destruction—men otherwise destitute, but who prefer the craft of mendicancy, or even the wages of crime, to accepting the relief upon the terms that the State offers it; so long as you have such a vagrant population, and do not dare to meet an evil which, from its very nature, must be one of increasing magnitude—the longer a remedy is postponed, so long will one chief cause of the bloodshed that desolates Ireland continue in full operation, and the punishment of any district in which a crime occurs, may be as little deserved as if it were inflicted upon the most distant part of the country. The Amendment that I would beg to suggest for this clause of the noble Earl's Bill is, that the county cess should be substituted for the poor rate, as the source from whence advances from the Consolidated Fund should be repaid. I shall not at present make any further remarks upon the provisions of the Bill. I confess that upon the whole it does not appear to me quite what is required to meet the case: however, as it is brought in upon the responsibility of the Government as a measure necessary for the peace of the country, I shall, as a Member of this House, give it my support, but, as an Irishman, I must, at the same time, be permitted to express the pain and mortification with which I find the case of Ireland, year after year, dragged before the public in some manner or other, calculated to give a very unfavourable impression of the Irish character, and one, I must say, the very reverse of what nationally is true concerning my countrymen. The state of the country is indeed undeniable and most lamentable; but that it is referable to anything peculiarly bad in the Irish character I emphatically deny. Frightful as the state of crime is, that has grown up by a continuance of misrule, and by the operation of causes which no steps have been taken to remove. I will, nevertheless, refer even to the organization of disaffection and crime which has been this night described. I will refer to that implicit obedience which is yielded to the mandates of an usurped authority, as in itself conclusive proof that there exists in the Irish population a spirit of subordination, which a Government capable of duly fulfilling its functions should secure on the side of lawful authority. My Lords, I earnestly hope that this Bill may be productive of the good intended; but I also hope that the Government will consider of other measures also for the permanent amelioration of the condition of Ireland. I do not mean such measures as have been this evening hinted at, calculated only to catch a passing popularity by the infliction of some permanent injury to the institutions of the country; but I allude to measures that may be of lasting and essential advantage to the country, and tend to order, civilization, and happiness.

LORD CAMPBELL had very readily given way to the noble Earl (Clancarty) whose observations, from his great information and his weight in the House, were much more deserving of attention than anything which he could offer. But at the same time he would have been sorry had the debate closed without his having had an opportunity of addressing them. He did not then wish to enter into the merits of the Bill. The state of Ireland was most deplorable: what the proper remedy for the evil might be, it was very difficult to determine; but as those who were more competent to form an opinion than he was, thought that the present was an experiment fit to be tried, he would

not presume to offer it any opposition. He rose more for the purpose of entering a protest against the sentiments which had fallen from his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham), with respect to giving a power to the prosecutor in every case to try the defendant at any distance from his place of abode. He agreed that there might be a state of things to render such a power necessary; and if it could be shown that the country was in such a deplorable state that witnesses were deterred from giving their evidence, and the jurors intimidated, he agreed that there would be some necessity of abridging the liberties of the people; and a power might be given to the Executive Government to change the place of trial until a better time should be restored to the country. But he had no difficulty in stating, from his study of the law and constitution, that that would be an encroachment on the just rights and privileges of the people of England and of Ireland. He admired, and he should continue to defend, the maxim of the common law of England, that a man was to be tried in the neighbourhood of the place where the offence had been committed. It was both for the advantage of the individual, and for the advantage of the public. If a man was innocent of the crime with which he was charged, he would be much better prepared to establish his innocence amongst his neighbours and those who knew his character and his habits. Besides, the expenses of carrying the witnesses to another place, perhaps at a great distance, were very great; but he said, for the sake of the public, it was most important that the trial, the sentence, and the punishment, should take place on the spot where the crime had been committed; and if a conviction resulted, and there were in the place others who had participated in the crime, it would undoubtedly have much more influence than if it had taken place at a distant part. A man innocently accused in his own neighbourhood, might be moved to a place where opinions, religious or political, contrary to those he himself entertained, were professed; and he might be convicted of the crime which he had not committed. Should they apply that principle to Ireland, would they give a power to move a man to be tried from the north to the south of Ireland, or *vice versâ* from the south to the north of Ireland? He thought that that was not a power to be given to the Government. He did not mean to insinuate that the power would be abused by the present Government; but it was a power which ought not to be intrusted to any one; and he would not allow it to exist for a moment in any part of the country, unless a real case of necessity were made out. [Lord Brougham: That is the law of England.] His noble and learned Friend said, and he (Lord Campbell) was surprised to hear him say it, that that was the law of England. He (Lord Campbell) deemed it was not the law of England. The law of England permitted a change in the *venue*, but it was always subject to the decision of the supreme Court of Queen's Bench, who could change the *venue* on its being shown that a fair trial could not be had in the county where the offence had been committed, and who, upon that, would change the *venue* to the next adjoining county, or any other county where a fair trial could be had. [Earl of Wicklow: It is the law of Scotland.] It was the law of Scotland, certainly; and he regretted to say that the criminal law of his native country was by no means so favourable to liberty as that of England: in Scotland, until lately, the Judges selected the jury; but he thought that would hardly be recommended as an example worthy of imitation. But, further, it had been laid down by the Scotch Judges, that the Court of Justiciary had power to create a new offence, some said short of life, others said capital. He hoped, therefore, the Scotch criminal law would not be urged as a precedent to be followed. If the Government could make out a case of necessity, the measure would be justified; and as their means of information were greater than his, he would not oppose the Bill, but content himself with entering the protest he had done, and saying, that it ought to be confined to two or three years at the most.

Lord BROUGHAM explained, that he had only said that it was the law of England in cases similar in this respect, that convictions could not be obtained, viz., smuggling cases.

Earl GREY said, that though he regretted the necessity for this measure, and thought that some of its provisions required modification, yet, in his opinion, the noble Lord who introduced it had sufficiently established a case for arming the executive Government with some additional powers. But, at the same time, he could not think the question of passing this Bill so entirely unconnected with the question of the general policy to be

pursued towards Ireland as several noble Lords seemed to imagine. Let it not be for a moment forgotten that this was not the first Bill of this description which the Imperial Parliament had been called upon to pass. On the contrary, though nearly half a century had elapsed since the Union with Ireland, it would be difficult to point out any consecutive five years in which the ordinary criminal law of the country had been alone in force in Ireland. There had been a series of extraordinary laws called for and passed, giving the Executive additional powers to secure peace and tranquillity to Ireland; with what effect, the dreadful statements made by the noble Earl opposite fully showed. The result, in fact, of all this extraordinary legislation had been merely to put down acts of outrage for the time, leaving the spirit of insubordination still in operation under the surface. So, with regard to the other measure announced in reference to Ireland, and which went to provide pecuniary relief for the immediate and deplorable distress in that country; measures of this kind, also, had been repeatedly passed by the Imperial Parliament, and, as clearly appeared from the statement of the noble Earl, without effecting any permanent improvement in the condition of the Irish people. In his opinion, these very statements of the result of past measures, proved that Parliament ought not now to content itself with merely passing similar measures to those which had been formerly passed under similar emergencies. He approved of passing the required measures under the circumstances; but he held that Parliament would not do its duty to the country unless it immediately followed up these temporary measures by others which should go to the root of the evil. What those ulterior measures ought to be, the second reading of the present Bill, he would fully admit, was not the fitting moment to discuss. But this he would say, at the same time, that if before this Bill left their Lordships' House—if, before its third reading there, they did not hear from Her Majesty's Government some account of their views and intentions on this all-important subject of future Irish policy; if Her Majesty's Government were not by that time prepared to lay before their Lordships some general plan of a comprehensive and statesmanlike policy—of a measure calculated to meet the real evil and go to its very root, then, he would say, it would be, in his opinion, the duty of that House—not to delay passing the present measure, not to refuse to the Government the powers which it said were necessary, but—to come to some solemn vote which should record their opinion of the necessity of adding to this measure, other measures of a broad and comprehensive description, calculated to prevent a recurrence of the evils now sought to be remedied. So strongly was he impressed with this conviction, that if no noble Lord of longer standing in that House than himself, and with greater claims to its confidence, took the matter up, he himself, unequal as he felt he was to the task, would, on the evening when this Bill should be read a third time, feel it his duty to submit to their Lordships in some shape or other—he was not prepared at the moment to say what—a Resolution or a Motion for an Address to Her Majesty, pledging the House not to rest satisfied with this measure, or with the other measure, however good in itself, for supplying relief to the immediate distress in Ireland, but to proceed further—to look more thoroughly and deeply into the source of the many evils afflicting Ireland, and to apply, with the least possible delay, remedies commensurate with the inveteracy of the malady. With reference to the details of the Bill before them, he highly approved of that part of it which threw on the various districts in which these offences took place the burden of providing for the sufferers or their families. and of providing rewards for the apprehension of the offenders. This was a happy application of a part of the social policy of the wisest of our Saxon kings. He considered it, however, most important that a measure of this kind, good and expedient though it might be, should not be passed without a limitation of its duration. With reference to the clause respectng persons being out between sunset and sunrise, he thought that ought to receive some modification.

The MARQUESS of WESTMEATH said, in reference to the observations of the noble Marquess (Clanricarde) about the powers of local magistrates, that he was old enough to remember former Coercion Acts. When proposals were made for their renewal, charges were brought against the magistrates of Ireland by the parties who were opposed to the measure, that they availed themselves of the power of transportation conferred by these Acts, to get rid of persons whose lives were in leases, by the dropping of which the magistrates would benefit. Now, he wished to say, on

behalf of the magistrates, that he was certain they would be well pleased to be relieved of these extraordinary powers altogether; and that the power of putting the law in force should be left altogether in the hands of the Lord Lieutenant and the Executive. With these observations he cordially concurred in the provisions of the measure.

Bill read 2ª.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, February 23, 1846.

Minutes.] Petitions Presented. By Mr. Dickinson, and Mr. Hume, from various places, for a Repeal of the Corn Laws.—By several hon. Members, from a number of places, against the proposed Measure respecting Customs and Corn Importation.—By Mr. Duncan, from Shipowners of the Port of Dundee, for Reduction of Duty on Timber.—From Governors and Directors of the Poor of the Parish of St. James, Westminster, for inquiry into alleged Illegal Proceedings of the Board of Management of the North Western Metropolitan District Asylums.—By Mr. Ewart, from Inhabitants of Hawick, for Remission of Sentence upon William S. Ellis.—By Mr. Charles Buller, and Mr. John O'Connell, from various places, in favour of a Ten Hours' (Factory) Bill.—By Mr. Blewitt, and Mr. Ewart, from Monmouth and Hawick, for Remission of Sentence upon Frost, Williams, and Jones.—By Sir Valentine Blake, from Members of the Galway Mechanics' Institute, alleging want of Funds to engage a Qualified Professor.—By several hon. Members, from various places, against Enrolment of the Militia.—By Mr. O'Connell, from Guardians of the Poor of the Midleton Union, for Relief from Payment of Loan.—By Mr. Vernon Smith, from Inhabitants of Northampton, against War.

JERSEY ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW.

Captain HARRIS wished to know whether there was any truth in a communication he had received from the Isle of Jersey to the effect that one of the Jurats in the Royal Court of that island had publicly cast imputations upon certain officers in Her Majesty's army.

Sir J. GRAHAM replied that an official representation had been made to him respecting a judgment which had been pronounced by one of the Jurats in that island in his judicial capacity, in consequence of which he (Sir J. Graham) had felt it to be his duty to require the Governor of that island to demand from the Jurat in question an explanation of the language attributed.

THE GREEK LOAN.

Mr. B. COCHRANE wished to know whether the Government of Greece had paid the interest upon the loan; and whether the right hon. Baronet had any objection to lay on the Table a copy of Lord Aberdeen's despatch upon the subject; also, whether he had received any official confirmation of the report that one of the recent mails, in passing the Isthmus of Corinth, had been attacked by a banditti, the despatches seized, and the whole of them, with one exception, opened.

Sir R. PEEL said, that the Government of Greece had not made any payment on account of the loan; in consequence of which it would be the duty of Her Majesty's Government, under the Convention, to make provision for that failure. He should not object to lay on the Table a copy of the despatch alluded to; but to the production of other Papers connected with that despatch he could not consent. With respect to the report that a mail had been stopped, and the despatches of Sir E. Lyons opened, the only information which he had received on the subject was contained in a letter from Sir E. Lyons, in which he stated that the mail of the 13th instant had been stopped about twenty miles from the capital; that every letter considered to contain money or despatches had been seized and opened; and that the only one which escaped was an official letter to Mr. Ralli, the Greek Consul in London.

THE WAR IN INDIA.

Sir R. INGLIS: I wish to ask the right hon. Baronet whether Her Majesty's Government have received the despatches in reference to the war now raging in India, which, according to an answer given last week by a Member of the Government, they were then expecting? If so, whether those despatches confirm generally the statements which are contained in the morning papers of this day? Whether they include returns of all the casualties that have taken place? And lastly, whether Her Majesty's Government are prepared to issue an *Extraordinary Gazette* to-night or to-morrow, which may relieve the intense anxiety which prevails upon the subject?

Sir R. PEEL: I am glad that the hon. Baronet has given me an opportunity of stating that despatches in reference to the event he alludes to were received at four o'clock, at the office of the Board of Control. I have not myself seen them; but I can state that they confirm generally the accounts which appear in the morning papers, viz., that through the consummate valour of the Indian troops and those of Her Majesty, a great victory had been gained against a great disparity in point of num-

bers, though accompanied by a great loss. The despatches are being copied, and, as they will appear in the next *Gazette*, I think, in the course of the night, I feel that I had better abstain from entering into any of the particulars which they contain.

THE ELECTIVE FRANCHISE IN IRELAND.

Mr. O'CONNELL put the following questions to the right hon. Baronet: 1st. Whether it be the intention of Her Majesty's Government to bring in any Bill, during the present Session, to enable the same proportion, as nearly as can be, of the people of Ireland to enjoy the elective franchise with the comparative proportion of the population of England enjoying that franchise? 2nd. Whether it be the intention of Her Majesty's Government to bring in any Bill, during the present Session, to enable the people of Ireland to return a just and an adequate number of representatives to this House? 3rd. Whether it be the intention of Her Majesty's Government to bring in any Bill, during the present Session, to equalize the franchise and powers in the Municipal Reform Act for Ireland, with the same franchises and powers conceded by the Municipal Reform Act of England to the English corporations? 4th. Whether it be the intention of Her Majesty's Government to bring in any Bill, during the present Session, to give to tenants in Ireland adequate and full compensation for improvements made upon their lands during the tenancy?

Sir R. PEEL: I propose to state generally, in answer to the questions of the hon. and learned Gentlemen, the course which the Government intend to pursue. It is not our intention to bring in any Government measure, unless of the most pressing necessity, until those affecting the commercial interests of the country shall have been disposed of. So far as Her Majesty's Government are concerned, we propose that, excepting the Mutiny Bill and some matters of finance, which are necessary for the conduct of the public business, the measures now pending for discussion shall have precedence before all others. I have, however, to state to the hon. and learned Gentleman, that we hope to be enabled, in the course of the present Session, to bring in a Bill for encouraging in Ireland the improvement of land, by providing, in certain cases, for compensation to tenants for improvements upon their holdings. We hope to be enabled to bring in a Bill, in the course of the present Session, amending the law with respect to the registration of county voters, and to the mode of holding elections generally in that country. That Bill will also propose alterations in the law as affecting the franchise of county voters. With regard to the Municipal Corporations of Ireland, Her Majesty's Government hope to be enabled to bring in a Bill, in the course of the present Session, the effect of which will be substantially, I will not say in every particular, to assimilate the municipal franchise in that country as nearly as possible to the municipal franchise in England. It is hardly fair to call for more explicit information. I should much prefer deferring any information respecting the details of those measures until the Secretary for Ireland shall have an opportunity of explaining them.

THE EXECUTION OF SEERY AT MULLINGAR.

Mr. O'CONNELL put the following questions to the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department:—1st. Will there be any objection to lay before the House the correspondence between the most rev. Dr. Cantwell, the Catholic bishop, and his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on the subject of Bryan Seery, who has been lately executed at Mullingar? 2nd. Whether a deputation, consisting of several persons, waited on His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, after the conviction and before the execution of Bryan Seery, to pray that the convict should not be respited, or his sentence transmuted, but that he should be executed? 3rd. To ask whether there be any instance in England, for the last century, of any person being tried for any capital felony by a second jury, after the first jury was discharged by the court, at the same session or assizes, and convicted and executed? and if so, state the time, place, and name of the individual.

Sir J. GRAHAM: With respect to the first question, I can say on the part of the Government, that there will be no difficulty whatever in laying on the Table of the House the correspondence to which that question refers. In answer to the second question, I have to inform the hon. and learned Gentleman, that a deputation from the county of Westmeath did wait upon the Lord Lieutenant before the execution of Seery, and made, upon their own part, a request that the law should be allowed to

take its course. I deeply regret the interference in this harsh and unusual manner. I must, however, be permitted to observe, that that interference had no effect whatever upon the decision of his Excellency, that decision having been come to exclusively upon the most careful consideration of the notes of the evidence, and of the opinion of the jury and the Judge who tried the case. With respect to the third question, the hon. and learned Gentleman will excuse me if I am not so versed or practised in the law as to be able to give him direct authorities on the subject; but I think I may say this, that it is an old principle of law, recognised throughout the United Kingdom, that a party accused of felony may be put upon his trial upon an indictment until he be acquitted or convicted by a jury of his country. That is undoubtedly the law. The hon. and learned Gentleman asks what cases have occurred in England of persons being tried for a capital felony by a second jury, after the first jury was discharged. I will answer the question. In 1794, at the summer assizes of York, before Mr. Justice Lawrence, a person charged with murder was convicted and executed, the Judge having discharged the first jury, and ordered a second to be sworn, by which he was found guilty. I should not be dealing candidly with the House, if I did not state there is a distinction in this case—the judge had not summed up, and a juror was taken ill; and Mr. Justice Lawrence, having referred to the notes of Mr. Justice Buller, in a like case, decided that the first jury should be discharged, a second empannelled, and the trial should proceed. It may be said that, in the present case, the opinion of the jury was formed and expressed in open court. The House will allow me to state that, in a recent case, on the Midland Circuit, the identical point was decided. At the last spring assizes, a female, of the name of Hannah Jarvis, was indicted before Mr. Justice Coltman, the jury could come to no decision, and their difference of opinion continuing at the close of the assizes they were discharged by the learned Judge. In the summer assizes the prisoner was again brought up on the same indictment before Mr. Justice Maule, a second jury was empannelled, and they proceeded to trial, which ended in a verdict of acquittal; but the principle was the same. With regard to the law and practice in such matters, they were both ruled in this case by two of the ablest criminal Judges of Ireland—the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and the Chief Baron of the Exchequer. Before proceeding to the second trial, the points were solemnly argued, and the judgment was pronounced by the Chief Baron Brady, who also pronounced the sentence. The Lord Lieutenant acted upon the opinions of these learned Judges in directing that the prisoner should undergo the extreme penalty of the law.

MR. O'CONNELL alluded to a case in which he had been counsel, when Chief Justice Pennefather ruled that his argument was inconsistent with the practice, and the trial was proceeded with. The twelve Judges met on the subject, and though they gave no decision, it was understood they had formed an opinion adverse to that of Chief Justice Pennefather.

LORD J. RUSSELL: The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, in answer to a question of the hon. and learned Member for Cork, stated that three measures would be brought forward by the Government with regard to Ireland—one upon the franchise, another upon the Municipal Corporations, and a third on the law of Landlord and Tenant; but that no such Bills would be introduced until the commercial measures now before the House have been disposed of. I wish to ask the right hon. Baronet if those Bills will be introduced before the Coercion Bill now before the other House is discussed in this House.

SIR P. PEEL: Perhaps the noble Lord will give me an opportunity of answering his question some other day.

COMMERCIAL POLICY—CUSTOMS—CORN LAWS—ADJOURNED DEBATE, (NINTH NIGHT).

MR. E. BULLER said, that though he rose under every disadvantage in following the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, yet confidence in the cause which he advocated, induced him to reply to some of the observations of the hon. Gentleman. He would at once dismiss all reference to the remarks made by the hon. Gentleman with regard to party and party connexions, and come at once to those arguments which bore on the question. The arguments of that hon. Gentleman, however, were not new: they consisted mainly of the old arguments which had been often brought forward, and as often refuted. The principal points adduced by the hon. Member were, firstly, that free importation without reciprocity drained the country of specie; secondly, that it involved the for-

feiture of the independence of this country by an entire reliance upon the importation of foreign grain; and, thirdly, that the imports of foreign grain depreciated the value of labour, and lowered wages. These were the arguments of the hon. Member, and they were by no means novel, though brought forward by the hon. Member in a new and brilliant light; if he might be allowed to say so, the hon. Member had dressed his jackdaw in the splendid plumage of an Indian aviary. The hon. Member said, that as ours was a territorial Constitution, it was the duty of Government to maintain the preponderance of agriculture. The hon. Member asked if we were prepared to fight hostile tariffs with free trade; and what was to become of diplomacy and commercial treaties? He thought there was no inconsistency in not regretting the failure of this diplomacy. The hon. Member said that we trusted that other countries would follow our example; and he bid us look at America, where there was no party or any public man that would support free trade; in France, said the hon. Member, the conservative, revolutionist, and the philosophic parties, were protectionists; that Monsieur Arago, M. Thiers, and M. Guizot, were all protectionists; and yet the hon. Member recommended that this country should try diplomacy and treaties. He did not think much good would be gained by the attempt. He remembered a speech of the hon. Member, when the late Government was in office, when the hon. Member taunted the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton with his abortive efforts to obtain commercial treaties. Since then, there had been six years of a Conservative Government, in which the course of free trade had not been advanced by diplomacy? The only way to induce foreign nations to embrace free trade was by proving its advantages by our own experience. If a high fiscal protection were the true policy, at least it should be shown, that we who for so many years had successively reduced our duties, while other nations raised theirs, had suffered by our erroneous reductions. The imports of this country which in 1820 amounted to 32,510,000*l.*, in the year 1843 amounted to 70,000,000*l.*; the exports, which were 38,000,000*l.*, in 1843 had increased to 117,000,000*l.* The exports had greatly increased in proportion to the imports, for the former had been trebled, while the latter were only doubled. Frequent reference had been made, in the course of the debate, to our trade with France. Since 1825 we had been gradually pursuing a system of reduction of duties on imports, while France had adhered to the high duties of her tariff. The result had been, that in the twelve years preceding 1825, when Mr. Huskisson first introduced his commercial reforms, the average exports to France were 326,858*l.*; the imports 939,000*l.*; whereas, from 1833 to 1844, the imports rose from 323,000*l.* to 3,005,000*l.*; the exports to 3,003,400*l.* He wished to show by these figures the effect which the liberal views of this Government, though met with opposite ones in France, produced on our exports and imports. ["Hear."] He was obliged to the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) for that cheer, for until now he thought he was speaking only to the benches. Though France had not profited by our example, still our success had been triumphant. But the hon. Member for Shrewsbury asked what would be the consequence of a large importation from foreign countries, while our exports were met by hostile tariffs—of our importing five millions from Russia, which had a hostile tariff, while we must, as a consequence, exports more goods to New York and Brazil, in order to get bills upon Russia; but if we found no bills our goods must come back. The hon. Gentleman, by introducing bills into the question, had confused the subject. The transaction must be of import from Russia, to be met by a correspondingly large export of British goods to Brazil and New York. From those places there must be exports to Russia, for which bills would be given, and those bills would necessarily be paid over to the British merchant. It was, therefore, only a roundabout way of carrying on trade with Russia. Then, said the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, "having shown you that you cannot succeed in meeting a hostile tariff by free trade, I will now tell you the consequence of these large importations from Russia, without any corresponding amount of exports from this country to Russia; the consequence will be a great drain of gold from this country." Now he had always considered that a great difficulty was unnecessarily introduced into these commercial questions by viewing gold as something different from any other commercial commodity. Gold was merely an article of trade, having its price like other commercial articles. No country could retain more gold than was sufficient to carry on its commercial relations. If there was a superabundance of gold, it would necessarily

be cheap, and of course it would be sent away to other countries where it was dear. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury next drew the attention of the House to Turkey. "That country," said the hon. Gentleman, "had had a perfect free trade for a long time, and the unchecked spirit of competition there had destroyed the whole of its manufactures." The hon. Gentleman boasted of having an extensive correspondence with all the eminent commercial men in Europe. Of no such extensive correspondence could he boast; but he believed there were certain practices in the Turkish empire, which were very likely to be peculiarly unpleasant to gentlemen engaging in trade in that country, and which might check the growth of commerce there, wholly irrespective of any system of free trade which that country might adopt. He would not quote the writings of gentlemen, who, after travelling in other countries, then returned and repaid the courtesies they had received with calumnies. The document he would refer to was a hatti sheriff, issued by the Minister of Turkey, and by which he proposed that the institutions of his country should be regenerated. The proclamation set forth the necessity of establishing three institutions essential to the well-being of the empire. The first was, to guarantee to the subjects of the sovereign, their life, honour, and fortunes; the second was, to fix the rate of taxes and the regulation of imports, and to rescue the people from the vexatious system of monopoly; and the third institution was with reference to the levying and maintenance of the army. This promulgation of new institutions, and this confession of old errors, were quite sufficient to make him believe, that if the trade and manufactures of Turkey had declined, it might be from other causes than from free trade. The next argument of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury was that which more peculiarly affected the Corn Laws. He said that it was dangerous to the independence of this country that its inhabitants should depend upon foreign countries for food, and that it would be especially dangerous in a time of war. But he denied that this country was at any time independent of foreign resources. In every year of deficiency the people of this country were for two months obliged to depend upon the supply of corn from abroad. Should that supply be cut off, what misery and destruction must ensue! But, supposing we were engaged in a foreign war, what material difference would that occasion? It was admitted by the hon. Gentleman himself, that if we could maintain the command of the ocean, we should then have the power of procuring a supply from every quarter of the world. But the time might come when this country might not be able to preserve that superiority: our resources then would only be in the wisdom of that commercial policy which in a time of peace, and in the height of our power, we might establish. Another argument of the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) was, that the importation of foreign corn must lower wages. Suppose, said the hon. Gentleman, you import four millions of quarters, and then, suppose that the wages of labour should not be increased, why should there be any greater consumption in the country? And, if not, then the four millions of quarters of foreign corn must displace four millions of quarters of home-grown corn; and, as a consequence, displace the home labour which would have been employed in the growing of those four millions. This would increase the amount of labour in the market, and thereby render labour cheaper, and so reduce wages. He considered that argument of the hon. Gentleman to be totally destitute of foundation. He conceived it to be utterly impossible that such an importation could take place without causing a reduction in the price of corn, and necessarily increasing the consumption. Suppose four millions of quarters were imported at 30*s.* a quarter, what would be the result? Why, the people would be able to purchase these four millions of quarters of foreign corn for six millions of money, instead of purchasing four millions of quarters of home-grown corn for ten millions of money. Thus they would retain to themselves four millions of money to be expended for other purposes. Such a transaction could not by possibility remove from British labour any portion of that capital. The six millions of money paid for the corn imported from abroad, must and would be supplied by the exportation of British goods to an equal amount. The remaining four millions of money would be available for the encouragement of manufactures and trade at home, and would to that extent advance the people in the social scale. The hon. Gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) next claimed protection, on the ground of exclusive burdens on the land. He (Mr. E. Buller) could not allow the claim on such narrow grounds. If

the landed aristocracy really sustained peculiar burdens, they were amply compensated by the exclusive honours which the "territorial Constitution" of this country bestowed upon them. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury then proceeded to enunciate a new principle. He called upon the House to look up to him as the oracle from whom they were to hear this great principle, which was to govern the new generation, and shed light and happiness on the world. And what was this great principle? "Give preponderance to the agricultural interest!" The great principle which he told Parliament to adopt, was, "Give power to one class in the State, by sacrificing the pecuniary interests of the other classes." This might be all well enough for those belonging to the favoured class; but suppose those belonging to the labouring class were to be asked how they would like it, what did the hon. Gentleman think would be their answer? If distinct classes were to be supported in this country, then there must be jealousies, and heartburnings, and discontent; and a feeling of alienation would govern the destinies of a large portion of the people; and the Sovereign would become, not the Queen of a nation, but only the Sovereign of a faction. The real question, however, for the House to consider was this:—were they now to proceed in the course they had adopted, or were they to retrace their steps? The great difficulty in considering this question was that of finding any two Gentlemen who were opposed to the present system, agreeing what course they really wished to be pursued. He, at all events, entertained the strongest objection to the principle of conferring a benefit on one class at the expense of another class of the community. You cannot protect the export trade, and you cannot protect the money interest. He believed that to those two great interests the giving of protection to the landed interest was a great vexation. He knew there were many Gentlemen who thought the home industry and colonial policy ought to be supported by legislation; but when he looked at the working of the two systems—that of free trade, protection to domestic and colonial trade—and contrasted their operations and their consequences, he could not doubt which of the two the country ought to be governed by. This principle once adopted, foreign nations would become valuable Colonies to us, without imposing on us the responsibility of governing them; and we might then look without jealousy at the rising prosperity of other countries. He felt that he had very inadequately discharged the duty he had proposed to himself; but he would sit down by observing, that though there were points in the measure of the right hon. Baronet which he might cavil at, if so disposed, he felt that so great was the importance of passing it, that he should suggest no Amendment, but should give it his earnest and cordial support, while he tendered to the Government his humble, but earnest tribute of praise, for having, under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, acted in that manner which was, upon the whole, the most consistent with their own principles, with their duty to their Sovereign, and to the nation at large.

CAPTAIN BATESON: During this protracted debate only one Irish county Member has addressed the House. I therefore feel it my duty, as one of the Representatives of a great, influential, and agricultural county, to state my reasons for giving my decided opposition to the proposed measure of Her Majesty's Ministers. In the first place, Sir, I shall take this opportunity briefly to allude to a speech delivered in this House on a former evening, which was so replete with philanthropy and the milk of human kindness—I allude to the hon. Member for Durham. I hold in my hand an extract from the half-yearly Report of Mr. Leonard Horner, Inspector of Factories, dated 26th of November, 1845, in which, after stating that he found the average of accidents occurring in cotton mills to be forty-five weekly, that Gentleman went on to say—

"I saw that a great many arose from the cog-wheels at the ends of certain spinning-machines called throstle-frames, causing severe lacerations of the hand, and making amputations of fingers necessary in many instances. I ascertained from the occupiers of some factories, where the machinery is carefully fenced, that it is both necessary and practicable to guard these cog-wheels; and their opinions were confirmed by that of an eminent machine-maker in Manchester. I therefore directed the warning notice to be left by the sub-inspectors at every factory where the cog-wheels of the throstle-frames are not boxed, and they are now leaving these notices in their present circuit of inspection. They inform me that, in general, they meet with the most ready compliance with the recommendation. Mr. Davies, the sub-inspector at Ashton, in his last Report, says, 'I have not had an objection made by any mill-occupier to fencing the throstle-frames.' The 43rd Clause provides, that the mill-occupier, on receiving such a notice, may call upon the inspector to have it submited to the arbitration of persons 'skilled in the construction of the kind of machinery to which

the notice refers,' whether the machinery alleged to be dangerous is so or not. Only one instance has yet occurred of this. One firm required an arbitration; they named Mr. Mason, of Rochdale, on their side, and I prevailed on Mr. B. Fothergill, machine-maker of Manchester, to be the arbitrator on my side. I had the satisfaction of being told afterwards, by a very competent judge, that I could not have selected a better. I recently received the award, which states, that the two arbitrators, not being able to agree, had chosen a third arbitrator, as the Act directs, and had called in Mr. William Fairbairn, of Manchester, and that the decision come to was, that it was both necessary and practicable to fence the machinery alleged in the notice to be dangerous."

That firm was the Messrs. John Bright Brothers, of Rochdale! Now I leave it to this House and to the country to decide whether the humanity of the hon. Member for Durham is genuine? Whether the sympathy he expressed for the poor man was not feigned? Whether his liberality, whether his philanthropy, is not spurious? One word more with respect to the hon. Member, and I have done with him; he referred to the state of the agricultural labourer in Wiltshire. The hon. Member for Wilts replied to him, but omitted to state one fact, viz., the average length of life in Wiltshire as compared with Manchester. In Wiltshire the average length of life is thirty-three years; in Manchester, only seventeen years. Having made these observations, it is my intention to confine my remarks chiefly to my own unhappy country. No man more deeply laments the failure of the potato crop in Ireland than I do, and no man is more anxious than I am to assist in passing any measure calculated to alleviate the distress which will be caused by it; but is it not a mockery to come forward and tell us that Ireland will be benefited by a measure which must depreciate the price of her agricultural produce, upon the sale of which eleven-twelfths of her population depend for their maintenance and support. Bills have been introduced into this House for the improvement of waste lands and for drainage in Ireland. There are at present in that country nearly four millions of acres capable of being reclaimed, and which would have been gradually reclaimed and brought into cultivation under the fostering influence of protection. Landlords would willingly have laid out their capital, secure of a return for their money, and having, in addition, the supreme satisfaction of knowing that they had contributed in no small degree to the amelioration of the condition of their fellow countrymen; and I am happy to say, there are many bright examples of this growing spirit among Irish landlords. Employment has been acknowledged on all sides to be the most efficacious, perhaps the only, means of relieving the distress and misery which prevail in Ireland; and I had fondly looked forward to the improvement in Ireland as a means of increasing employment, and in the same proportion diminishing wretchedness, and thus elevating the position of the Irish peasant. But if this measure of the right hon. Baronet be carried, does anybody suppose or expect that landlords will lay out their capital with the certainty of loss staring them in the face? Can the tenant, then, unassisted, first reclaim the bog (even if he had it rent free), and then grow corn upon it, so as to compete successfully with the foreigner, who has the advantage of climate, and whose land is now in a high state of cultivation? No; the bog will still remain barren, the hill-side will grow nothing but heather, and one of the channels of employment for our teeming population will be permanently blocked up, and their moral and social improvement materially retarded. I feel strongly on this question, both for the Irish farmer and the Irish manufacturer. In the north of Ireland the handloom weaver is frequently also a farmer; and the farmer often devotes the time he can spare from agriculture to the loom. Why, under our present system of protection, in one small town in the north of Ireland, upwards of eighteen thousand pounds' worth of linen is sold at the weekly market! But what will be the case of Ireland, as compared with her present condition, should this measure be carried? Why, at one fell swoop, our export trade will be destroyed, our agricultural produce will be shut out of the English market by foreign competition, and our linen trade annihilated. As an advocate of protection to the farmer, as an advocate of protection to the manufacturer, I protest against so unnecessary, so hazardous, and so revolutionary a scheme; and I implore this House to pause ere it severs one of the two great bonds of union between these two countries, one of which is the Irish Church, the other the benefit Ireland derives from having a just advantage over the foreigner in the English market. And I cannot doubt but that this measure will have the effect of stimulating the advocates of the Repeal of the Union to increased exertions: they will say to the farmer, "Eng-

land has deprived you of the benefit her markets have hitherto afforded you for the sale of your corn, your butter, your beef, your pork;" to the handloom weaver they will say, "Your occupation is gone, your linen trade is ruined, you are in no better position than the foreigner—none of you can now refuse to join us in the cry of "hurrah for the repeal!" Again, let me implore this House to pause before it places such a powerful weapon in the hands of artful and designing agitators; and I confess it is not without apprehension and alarm that I look forward to the probability of this measure passing into a law, the consequences of which it is impossible to foresee, and which may be but the foreshadowing of other revolutions, even of more vital interests, which would lead to the destruction of our once much-prized Constitution, and the dismemberment of this great Empire. I will not take up the time of the House by alluding at any length to the miscalled compensation which has been offered to Ireland—I refer to the proposed transfer of the charge for the police force to the Consolidated Fund. I shall merely state that in the county Londonderry, the charge to the county for this force has averaged for the last three years 2,278*l.* 10*s.* 5*d.* per annum, which is but a fraction over 1*d.* per acre. Had the Government proposed to relieve Ireland from the repayment of the loan for the erection of the workhouses, no doubt it would have been considered a boon; but now, the only persons relieved by the proposed measure will be the midnight legislators of the disturbed districts, who are necessarily saddled with a large police force. Is not this a premium to agitation? And now, with regard to certain speeches which we have heard delivered during this debate: I trust it will not be considered presumption in me, if I ask this House whether it will sanction the sentiments they inculcate? Whether this House, by its deliberate decision, will ratify those opinions? Whether this House of Commons will solemnly declare that there is to be a new faith in politics, a new Parliamentary creed? Whether its Members are to become mere weathercocks, veering about with the breath of every popular outcry, and serving only to point out the quarter from whence the blast of agitation is strongest? I confess, for my part, I am still sufficiently old-fashioned to admire consistency, and I still retain the ancient motto of my county—"No Surrender." And let me here give this warning to those advocates of free trade who say that—"you must go with the times"—"that now-a-days there is no standing still"—"that in this railroad age we must move onward"—I would have them take care lest while the movement be onward, it be not at the same time downward. And now, Sir, in conclusion, permit me to ask the right hon. Baronet—supposing this great scheme, this comprehensive measure, shall have been proved by bitter and dear-bought experience to have failed—supposing, I say (for the right hon. Baronet is bound to provide against every contingency) there should be days of adversity in store for this country—if, when thousands of acres which now grow corn, have been thrown out of cultivation, want of employment and consequent distress prevail in the manufacturing districts, and to this should be superadded all the horrors of war—let me ask the right hon. Baronet, how will he then answer the cry of those despairing multitudes? Let me ask how are we to retrace our steps—how are we to regain the footing we have lost? How will he restore to this country the vantage ground he is now so tamely giving up?

> "Facilis descensus Averni
> Sed revocare gradum—
> Hoc opus, hic labor est."

Mr. MONTAGUE GORE said, the opinions he was about to express, and the vote he intended to give, were opinions, and would be a vote, at variance with those of a large body within that House, for whom he entertained the highest esteem and the sincerest regard; it would also be a vote at variance with the sentiments of many without the House, for whom also, as for the others, he felt the highest regard; moreover, the opinions he then entertained on this subject were at variance with the opinions he formerly held; and, in justice to himself and the public, he felt bound to come forward manfully and openly, and state the reasons that influenced him on the present occasion. In so doing he agreed with the hon. Member who had last spoken, that the consistency which scorned to yield to popular agitation, or be lured from the path of duty, was indeed to be prized; but the consistency which, when convinced that its course was erroneous, still adhered to it—that did so in despite of the evils that would be caused by so doing—that was a consistency which he could neither admire nor follow. What subject or question could be named on which there had not been change, both in

that House and the country? Take the Catholic question—the slavery question—take the present question of the Corn Laws—and what great discrepancies of opinion would not be found to have existed upon them? In 1814 or 1815 the advocates of the Corn Laws thought 80*s.* or 90*s.* a quarter only a fair price for corn; yet the same Gentlemen afterwards allowed that they had been in error on this subject, and that between 50*s.* and 60*s.* was a fair price. Mr. Huskisson himself, one of the greatest names of that House, was, both in 1815, and afterwards, a strong advocate of the protection measures of that day; yet, it was well known, that before his death he was of opinion that the Corn Laws could not be maintained. If it was an error, therefore, though he could not allow it to be an error to bend to the force of reasoning, it was one of which that House, and men on both sides of it, had been repeatedly guilty. He declared, for his own part, that he should think himself unworthy of a seat in that House—unworthy to take part in any public debate or public discussion, if when convinced of an error, he did not come forward and manfully and firmly avow it. And, in allusion to the debates of 1814 and 1815, perhaps he might be excused, at those debates, remarking that, in looking, he found that there was one venerable Member of the House (Colonel Gore Langton), on whom, at least, the charge of inconsistency could not be thrown; for in 1814 or 1815, the hon. Member had opposed the Motion that the Speaker do leave the chair in order to go into Committee, when that was moved by Mr. Robinson (now Earl of Ripon). To those opinions the hon. Member had always adhered; and notwithstanding his advanced age and infirmities, he would come down and give his vote in favour of the Government. He (Mr. Gore), on his own part, would at once say, that he would rather have seen this measure brought forward by the noble Lord opposite; and had it been brought forward by him, he should have had his cordial, strenuous, and decided suppport. He did not think that the mere desire for a settlement of the question relative to the Corn Laws, would alone justify him in giving his vote; but he was of opinion, that there existed an absolute and pressing necessity for such a settlement; and that, taking into consideration the effect which a distraction in the councils of the nation would have upon the many great interests involved in the security of our vast colonial possessions and Indian Empire, they were called upon to set aside all slighter differences; and if they feared no evil result, to give their fullest support to the Government. He considered it of the highest importance that the Minister of this country, whatever be his party, should be enabled to carry on the Government with firmness and energy; and in addition to the reasons, furnished by that belief, guiding him in the course he was pursuing, it was his most decided conviction that the repeal of the Corn Laws, in the manner proposed, would be attended with no detriment to the public. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War, in the remarks which, on a previous night he had made, had said that the agriculturists were labouring under a delusion. Gentlemen might quarrel with a term: it might, perhaps, have been said, that those Gentlemen were mistaken; and certainly he coincided in that opinion; and he did think that in the opposition offered by hon. Gentlemen to the measure, they had been led away by a very mistaken view of the facts. He considered that it was altogether impossible, as some had supposed, that the proposed changes could ever expose England to a deluge of foreign corn; and, on examination, such would be found to be the inevitable inference. He had made inquiries, extensively, among merchants and others engaged in the American and European corn trade, and the results he would as briefly as possible lay before the House. One highly respectable authority in the City had assured him, quite in accordance with the statement of Mr. Jacob, that at Dantzic the ordinary price of wheat, free on board, was 40*s.* the quarter, to which were to be added, for freightage, 4*s.* 8*d.*, insurance, 1*s.* 4*d.*, and loading and landing, 6*s.* 9*d.*—together 12*s.* 6*d.*; thus making the price of the quarter of wheat in this country 52*s.* 8*d.* Another respectable gentleman put the charges at importation at 10*s.* in which he included a small sum for damage to cargo. With regard to Odessa, he had ascertained that for the three years ending in 1840, the price of wheat there, on the spot, was 34*s.* 6*d.* the quarter. The freight from Odessa to London amounted to 8*s.* 6*d.*, insurance to 1*s.* 4*d.*, and the other charges to 5*s.* together 14*s.* 10*d.*; making the price in this country 49*s.* 4*d.* the quarter. This statement had been confirmed by highly respectable parties; one gentleman assured him that the freight and charges

would be 15*s.* a quarter; and another, who was largely connected with Odessa, and that part of Europe, had informed him that, taking an average of years, the corn from thence was sold here at a price varying between 48*s.* and 50*s.* the quarter. If this were correct, he saw nothing to apprehend from the passing of the measure before the House. It might be said, that an inducement being held out, the agriculture of these countries would undergo, and was capable of undergoing, great improvements; but it was forgotten that, to effect that end, there must be the necessary capital, labour, and facilities of conveyance, all of which were wanting. The estates on which the corn was grown were so embarrassed, that there were great impediments, even if there was the inclination, to any material increase of capital to be employed in the cultivation of land. The existence of feudal tenures, too, was an effectual bar to the concentration of labour; the labourers were serfs; and, in the great majority of instances could not be removed from one estate to another. And then, with respect to the modes of conveyance; it was known that corn was conveyed to Dantzic by water carriage, and on arriving there the boats were broken up, and sold for a mere trifle when compared with the original cost. To Odessa the corn was brought overland 400 or 500 miles, by means of carts, drawn by bullocks. Would not the knowledge of these circumstances fully justify this conclusion, that, as far as the Continent of Europe was concerned, no great increase for a number of years could be anticipated in the quantity of provisions to be imported into Great Britain. The hon. Member for Somersetshire had alluded to America, and had contended that it was out of the question for the English agriculturists to expect any successful, any but a ruinous, competition with the corn growers on the other side of the Atlantic. It should, however, be borne in mind that in America capital was wanting, labour was excessively high, and that the yield per acre was very small in comparison with what was found to be the case in England and other countries in Europe. It was quite true, as had been said by the hon. Member, that the extent of land under cultivation was considerable; but was that a circumstance favourable to the hon. Member's argument? What did they deduce from the reports of the agricultural societies in America? Why, they would see that the great subject of complaint with those desirous of promoting improvements was, that the very extent of land under tillage, caused a careless and unscientific cultivation. At an agricultural meeting in Albany, in the winter of 1844, Mr. O'Reilly said—

"Such has been the depreciation of the wheat crops, owing to the exhaustion of the soil, consequent on ill-judged farming, that the product of the wheat lands, between the Seneca lake and Virginia river, has not, for the last three or four years, exceeded the low average of eleven or twelve bushels per acre. Indeed, I have authority for declaring that, in reference to a single county (Seneca), the average yield is now not over ten bushels per acre."

Dr. Buckman, addressing the Dutchess County Agricultural Society, said—

"Where is the farm that will now upon the average yield forty bushels of wheat to the acre? If in this assemblage there is an individual who owns that farm, and realizes that result, I will stop: no one speaks. If not forty, then thirty; if not thirty, then twenty."

Mr. Van Ranselaer, president of the Agricultural Society of Ranselaer county, said—

"One reason why our land has not advanced more rapidly, grows out of the wide circle in which it is expanded—new lands yield with but comparative little labour; and to produce a certain amount, many acres are put into cultivation: when these fail to make a profitable return, the farmer, instead of repairing the exhaustion of the soil, often adopts, as he supposes, an easier method of obtaining his purpose, by moving to one of the new States, where a rich harvest may be reaped with little trouble of sowing. To cultivate less land, and in a superior manner, is the point to be ascertained."

Mr. Kirby, president of the Jefferson County Society, speaking of the repeal of our Corn Laws, said—

"It appears by an official report made to the British Parliament, in 1841, that the average price of wheat for the seven previous years, at the principal ports of the Baltic and the Black Sea was 77 cents per bushel; while, during the same years, the average price at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, was 1 dollar 40 cents. The cost of freight to England, from the European ports referred to, was 13 cents per bushel. The freight from our ports to England was 17 to 18 cents per bushel. Thus it is apparent that our most favoured wheat region cannot compete even-handed with the continent of Europe for the wheat trade with England, unless we consent to a general reduction of wages to the European standard—a thing quite out of the question."

Tooke says—

"Barring any extraordinary difference in the seasons, I should expect that the price here, with the ports always open, would, in a series of years of some length, average about 45*s.* This country, but more especially the port of London, will be the emporium of the trade in corn between Europe and America. Thus, there will be a great increase

of trade, and we shall be sure of supply if our crops are deficient."

Allusions had been made in the course of the debate to what would be the remunerating price to the English farmer; and the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had been asked to say what he thought a fair price. But he must say, that of all the difficult questions to be solved, this seemed to him the most difficult. It was a subject on which a great diversity of opinions had prevailed, and still did prevail; and it was also a subject concerning which an agreement would perhaps never be come to. In 1814 and 1815, men of great experience and of high authority had endeavoured to show, and very generally convinced the public, that the agriculturist could never cultivate with profit, if he failed in obtaining the price of 80*s.* a quarter. In 1818 similar statements had been made by individuals, whose opinions were entitled to the same respect and yet prices had declined; and what had been the consequence? It was a consequence in which the nation had rejoiced—a great increase in agricultural improvement. On this point Mr. Tooke said—

"The averages of the six years following, when there was no foreign wheat, or no proportion worth mentioning in the market, were, 1832, 58*s.* 8*d.*; 1833, 52*s.* 11*d.*; 1834, 46*s.* 2*d.*; 1835, 39*s.* 4*d.*; 1836, 48*s.* 6*d.*; 1837, 55*s.* 10*d.*; average, 50*s.* 3*d.* But if it be considered that by far the largest quantities sold were in the three years of the lowest prices; viz., 1834, 46*s.* 2*d.*; 1835, 39*s.* 4*d.*; 1836, 48*s.* 6*d.*; average, 44*s.* 8*d.*; and that, during that period, although, as usual, on the occurrence of low prices, there were loud complaints of agricultural distress, the country never exhibited a greater extent nor a higher degree of cultivation; it is perfectly fair to presume, that, at a price of 45*s.*, there would be no reason to apprehend that much, if any, land would be thrown out of cultivation. The general fact is, in proof, by results beyond controversy, that the agricultural productions of the kingdom were never, as far as the seasons permitted, on a larger scale than in 1836 and 1837, notwithstanding the alleged discouragement of the low prices of 1834 and 1835."

For his part, he was inclined to believe that the principal aids to a rapid progress in agricultural science, and to an increase in the profits of those engaged in agriculture, were to be found in the development of our manufacturing interest. If they looked to the periods when the greatest improvements had taken place in agriculture, they would discover that those improvements were coincident with an extension of the capital and an addition to the amount of labour engaged in manufactures. If they took the history of this country at the period immediately previous to the accession of George III. to the Throne, and when manufactures in Great Britain were in their infancy, that they would perceive that agriculture at that time was stationary, and had undergone, for a considerable number of years, scarcely any improvement. When, in 1760, manufactures improved, agriculture, it would be remarked, had made a corresponding advance, and since then the progress of the two interests, fostered by capital and skill, had been in conjunction. And judging, therefore, from the past, he felt perfectly assured that the measure, the adoption of which was now recommended, would, if carried, make the further progress, both of agriculture and in manufactures, more certain and more rapid. He had said before that he was not advocating the proposition merely because he concurred in thinking it was necessary the Government should be kept in office; if he considered that that end would be obtained, at any material sacrifice of the agricultural interests, he would give his most strenuous opposition to the scheme of the right hon. Baronet; but from an increase in population there must result great increase in demand for agricultural produce. All experience and all reason went to prove that a benefit to the manufacturing would be a benefit to the agricultural interest; and among the many authorities who had dealt with the subject, none had spoken more plainly or more convincingly on that point than Hume:—

"When manufactures and mechanical arts are not cultivated, the bulk of the people must apply themselves to agriculture; and if their skill and industry increase, there must arise a great superfluity from their labour, beyond what suffices to maintain them. They have no temptation, therefore, to increase their skill and industry, since they cannot exchange that superfluity for any commodities which may serve either to their pleasure or vanity. A habit of indolence naturally prevails. The greater part of the land lies uncultivated. What is cultivated yields not its utmost for want of skill and assiduity in the farmers. Were our narrow and malignant politics to meet with success, we should reduce all our neighbouring nations to the same state of sloth and ignorance that prevails in Morocco and the coast of Barbary. But what would be the consequence? They could send us no commodities; they could take none from us; our domestic commerce itself would languish for want of emulation, example, and instruction; and we, ourselves, should soon fall into the same abject condition to which we had reduced them. I shall, therefore, venture to acknowledge, that not only as a man, but as a British subject, I pray for the flourishing commerce of Germany, Spain, Italy, and even France itself. I am, at least, certain that Great Britain and all those nations would

flourish more, did their Sovereigns and Ministers adopt such enlarged and benevolent sentiments towards each other."

A great change like that proposed would naturally create great apprehension; and in the remarks he (Mr. Gore) had to make, he would carefully guard against saying one word that would convey anything but his respect for those Gentlemen with whom it was his misfortune he differed. Similar changes in the history of every country had been attended with similar expressions of doubt, dismay, and dissatisfaction. A remarkable instance of that nature occurred at the time when Spain, in 1765, having at last been convinced of the ill effects of her past policy, proposed a total alteration in the fiscal laws relating to the intercourse between the mother country and her Colonies. All cried out against it, and loudly predicted ruin and disaster. In a short time the new system was found to work advantageously; and in the end the merchants of Cadiz, who had been the most strenuous in their previous opposition, were the most prominent in their exultations on the new state of affairs. A train of events, identical in their character, marked the extension of turnpike roads from London to remoter counties; the possessors of property round London declared they would be ruined; but when their entreaties were neglected and the roads were made, the benefits of the alteration were experienced, and since had been fully acknowledged. It was, none would deny, most important to consider the way in which the new Bill would affect the poor; and the proportion likely to exist between prices and wages. —In reference to that portion of the inquiry the hon. Gentleman read the following documents :—

"Harvest of 1795 very deficient, price of wheat six guineas per quarter. Season of 1796 favourable, price fell to 56*s.* at end of year. In 1797 quality was bad, quantity deficient. Harvest of 1798 only moderately abundant, consequently no store of grain to bring in in aid of deficient harvest of 1797; immediately after which the price rose to 92*s.* 7*d.* per quarter. In 1800 the quality was injured by excessive rains, and the quantity was so short that the average price of wheat, on the 1st of January, 1801, had advanced to 139*s.* per quarter. Before the harvest of 1801 was secured, the price of wheat in the London market reached 180*s.* per quarter, and the quartern loaf was, for four weeks, as high as 1*s.* 10½*d.*"

It was curious (continued Mr. Gore) to observe how intimate a relation existed between the prices of food and the number of marriages.

"The falling-off in the number of marriages observable in 1795, 1800, and 1801, was in each year very marked in its character. The harvest of 1801 was moderately abundant, and as, in addition to the home produce, the importation of wheat, under the stimulus of a bounty, had been very large, the price fell, in the latter part of this year, to less than half what it had been before the harvest. In 1802 the crops, although not very abundant, yielded enough, with a small importation, for our wants, and prices became still more moderate. The number of marriages in these two years, according to the registers, was 90,396 in 1802, and 94,379 in 1803. In March, 1804, the average price of wheat was as low as 49*s.* 6*d.* per quarter; but the harvest in that year was far from being good, and towards Christmas the price was double what it had been nine months before. The price continued high until the result of the harvest of 1805 could be known. This proving more favourable, and a considerable quantity of foreign grain having been imported, prices again receded, but not extensively. The number of marriages in 1804 and 1805 again showed the restraining effect in this respect of high prices, having been 85,738 and 79,586 respectively."

All these facts and statistics went to show that the country flourished in the greatest degree when there was the greatest abundance, combined with cheapness of food. He had supported the Corn Law as it then existed, because he had looked upon it as the law best suited to the circumstances; but he had since seen reason to doubt the correctness of that opinion. It had been said of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for South Wilts (Mr. S. Herbert), by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli), that he was responsible for the labouring population of South Wilts. He (Mr. Gore) was bound to say that he did not believe the agricultural interest or the agricultural labourers had a better friend than the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War; and he spoke from a knowledge of the kind feeling shown by him to all on his property. With regard to the assertion that the Corn Law had worked well, it was for the advocates of the law to reconcile this assertion with the fact, that under its operation the farmer had to sustain a progressive fall in the price throughout not less than five successive years, from 75*s.* in 1831, till it got down to 36*s.* On the occurrence of the first season following, of marked deficiency, in 1838, the public obtained no relief till the aggregate averages of the six weeks had attained in September 73*s.* 2*d.*, when suddenly, in a single week, 1,513,113 quarters of wheat and wheat meal were liberated, at the low duty of 1*s.* per quarter. The price, in consequence, declined in four weeks from 77*s.* to 61*s.* 10*d.*, so that whereas the previous rise was for

the benefit of the wealthier farmers who had been enabled to hold their stocks of the crop of 1837 to the last, the subsequent fall was to the detriment of the numerous class of small farmers, who, having by that time got in their crops in all the divisions of the island south of the Humber, were threshing out, and, as usual, bringing the earliest supplies to market. Therefore, he thought it was an error to suppose that the Corn Law had worked to the advantage of the small farmers. What had been the effect of the Corn Law upon other interests? In years of scarcity, there was a sudden demand for ships; freights rose; shipowners got large profits: but when the prices of corn fell, down went the profits of the shipowner. The effect of the law, and of a sudden demand for corn, was mischievous upon capital, as well as upon the interests of shipowners. He was inclined to agree with a remark of the hon. and learned Member for Bath, that the hopes on one side and the fears on the other were equally exaggerated. He had the authority in favour of free trade, not only of Bishop Watson, Mr. Horner, Lord Wallace, and Lord Wellesley, but of a statesman, second to none in experience, knowledge, and attachment to the Constitution; he alluded to Lord Grenville, who, in the debate upon the East India Charter, in 1813, said—

"Those who understand, as your Lordships do, the real nature of commerce, and the true principles of its wise administration, well know that all its interests are interwoven; all its branches inseparably connected. It is the union, not of commerce with Government, but of commerce with commerce, that a provident legislation will respect. Numerous are the commercial enterprises which would be of small benefit if limited to the direct intercourse of one country with another, but which, by intermediate or subsequent transactions, in other markets and in distant regions, become highly advantageous both to private and to national interests. For the encouragement of such hopes no moment was ever yet more favourable. The barrier of prejudices is shaken, the spirit of monopoly is rapidly giving way to juster principles of commercial legislation, and the change of public opinion in this country is seconded by the great revolutions of the world."*

These were the sentiments of Lord Grenville, than whom no man was more sincerely attached to the Constitution of this land; so that, if this question was to be decided by authority, there could be none of greater weight. For the reasons he had stated he should give his decided and cordial support to the measure of Her Majesty's Government. He believed that the measure was framed upon sound principles; he thought it calculated to promote all the great interests of this great Empire. It was not by swelling any one interest into unnatural proportions, but by fostering the general welfare of the State, that the life-blood was best distributed to every member, and the symmetry and vigour of the whole preserved. The welfare of agriculture depended not on their protective laws, but on the enterprize breathed into all interests by the spirit of freedom, and protected by equal laws; and if, looking beyond the narrow segment of their immediate age and country, he contemplated the distant regions to which British commerce, when free from restrictions was destined to extend—

"The shores watered by her wealthy tides;"—

when he viewed her, over this extensive space, shedding far and wide the beams of civilization, liberty, and pure religion, as a man and as a Christian he rejoiced at the prospect; as an Englishman he exulted that this country was likely to be the instrument of dispensing such blessings to the human race. He repeated, that he would not yield this measure to intimidation; and he thought it would be unbecoming loyal English gentlemen to be swayed by such a motive. But he hoped that they would come to a decision "having their hearts," in the beautiful and simple language of that prayer with which they auspicated their daily proceedings in that House, "free from partial interests, prejudice, and party affections;" and that, whatever vote they gave might be such as would most conduce to the permanent and durable welfare of Great Britain, and to the happiness of the countless millions who were subject to her sway, or dependent on her destinies.

Mr. FITZGERALD wished to impress upon Her Majesty's Ministers the urgent necessity of relieving his unfortunate country from the horrors of famine. He was happy to say, that it was with no small gratification and pleasure that he had listened to the speech of the right hon. Baronet the other night; and he (Mr. Fitzgerald) could corroborate the accounts read by the right hon. Baronet and the statements he had made. He could not but express his satisfaction likewise at the conduct of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary for the Home Department, in introducing measures for promoting public works in Ireland, so as to give the poor the means of buying what

* Hansard, vol. xxv, p. 744.

they wanted. He was not going to answer the statements of the hon. Member opposite (Captain Bateson) respecting the manufactures of Ireland. He acknowledged he knew more about land than manufactures; nor would he notice what he had stated about the firm of Bright and Co.; he had no doubt if the hon. Member for Durham had been in his place he would have been able to answer him. With regard to the measure of Her Majesty's Government, he confessed that until he entered the House his idea was for perfect free trade; and although he had not altered his opinions, still he thought that the measure of Her Majesty's Government was the best that could be brought forward at the present moment. He thought that any sudden change to free trade (though he was in favour of free trade) would do rather injury than good, and that it showed the wisdom and good sense of the right hon. Baronet not to bring forward a measure of sudden free trade, but to afford such a time for the measure to take effect as was usual in agricultural operations and changes of crops. He acknowledged that when the measure was first brought forward by the Government great alarm was felt in Ireland; and as a Member of one of the largest counties in Ireland, and almost entirely agricultural, he had felt it to be his duty to hear the opinions of his constituents, and to see how far they accorded with his own. The result was, that though alarmed at first, coupled with the compensations—which he, however, considered no compensations whatever—they were disposed decidedly to support the measure of Her Majesty's Government. Considering all the other changes for the last few years, a change in the commercial policy of this country must be made. We must go according to the times, and go onward, not, he hoped, as the hon. Member (Captain Bateson) expected, downwards. He was glad to hear the kind expressions which had been used towards Ireland by hon. Gentlemen in that House; but he could not help saying, that the conduct of that which was now the Ministerial party did not practically carry out the kindness which persons in that House were so anxious to profess. As to the vote which he intended to give, he did believe that the prevailing sentiments in the place which he represented would secure to him the gratitude of his constituents. He should support the measure of the right hon. Baronet, for this amongst other reasons, that he admired the moral courage with which he brought forward and sustained the policy which he thought it his duty to pursue. There could be no doubt that a Government, with the noble Lord the Member for London at its head, could do much for Ireland, because the people of that country regarded the present Ministerial party as their enemies, and the Liberal party as their friends; but no man could doubt that the measure now under their consideration was one calculated not to promote the interest of a few, but to advance the prosperity of the nation at large.

Mr. LOCKHART was at all times reluctant to obtrude himself on the House, but could not submit to give a silent vote on that occasion. He had a deep sense of the services which Her Majesty's Ministers had rendered to their country. He had not forgotten the distress and the despondency which existed in it at the time of their coming into office, or the many difficulties from which they had extricated it; he, therefore, most sincerely regretted to find himself placed in opposition to them on this question. His regret was great in proportion to the respect in which he held them. When the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government proposed an alteration in the Corn Laws in 1842, he had given him his humble and willing support; he had reason to know that the vote he then gave met with the approbation of his constituents; and since the present scheme was announced he had received a communication from a very influential body of them expressing the same moderate views. They contented themselves by saying, that as long as protection was given to manufactures of any description it was most unjust to deprive agriculture of it; and he believed they would be satisfied were the three years of promised protection, like the three years of the right hon. Baronet's Income Tax, prolonged to an indefinite period. For his own part, he desired to see all their interests protected moderately, and on equitable principles. He had no wish, he never had any wish, for exclusive advantages to agriculture; but he must say, that the cry of class legislation came with a bad grace from those who raised it. Few interests had been more largely favoured than that of cotton manufactures. Up to 1819, if he mistook not, foreign goods of that description were subject to a duty of 85½ per cent., and till a more recent period to a duty of 50 per cent. There was also, at

one time, a bounty on the exportation of printed calicoes of our own manufacture. He had said, he desired no exclusive advantages to agriculture. Accordingly, had the proposal of the right hon. Baronet been a diminution of the protection it now enjoyed, he should not have hesitated to have voted with him; but for the total abandonment of protection he was not prepared. He remembered the often-quoted caution of Montesquieu—"Beware of following the example of the savage, who, to get at the bread fruit, cuts down the tree on which it grows." He hesitated to give his assent to a measure long earnestly desired by all who sought the overthrow of our Constitution, and the dismemberment of the Empire. He was returned, and that unanimously, to that House by a numerous constituency on protective principles, and to these principles he was bound in honour to adhere; for no new circumstances had arisen, no new reasons had been assigned, to induce him to change his opinions. He could not think we were justified in sweeping away all protection, in order to remedy a casual calamity or a defect in the existing system, which could be readily removed by a simple alteration. The misfortunes which now threatened Ireland, and which the right hon. Baronet feared would be seriously felt in less than three months, had nothing to do with this question. They must be met by other means, and not by a measure which would not come into operation till the end of three years. With regard to other interests affected by the Resolutions, the experience of the Tariff of 1842, instead of being a reason for abandoning protection to them, was rather a reason why they should adhere to it. His hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Liverpool had shown that free trade would injure our Colonies, and lead, probably, to their separation from us. He felt the force of his observations. He saw, also, as respected ourselves, serious obstacles in the circumstances of this country and of Europe. One of the obstacles was the unwillingness of Foreign Powers to enter into reciprocal engagements. The orators of the League admitted this, by invariably assuming that the whole world must follow the example of Great Britain; but though the right hon. Baronet seemed disposed to countenance their prophecies, he adduced no facts that could lend them any distinct and convincing authority, except as to one or two very insignificant States. Another, and even more serious objection, arose out of the enormous debt with which we were loaded, and from which other nations were, in a great measure, exempted. In whatever manner our taxes might be raised, it was obvious they must press on all classes, even on the very poorest; and therefore this country ought to be one of the last to abandon protection to its native industry. There was another disadvantage, certainly not of the same important character, yet not altogether unworthy of consideration—that this measure would tend to perpetuate the Income Tax, from which his constituents were anxious to be relieved, or prevent a reduction of the duty on tea, which would be a great boon to all classes, and a great benefit to our commerce. It would also prevent the Chancellor of the Exchequer from dealing with taxes which affected the industry of our people. Some of the assessed taxes, for example, interfered directly with their employment; and he was at a loss to know on what ground this could be justified, when we were about to allow untaxed foreigners to enter into competition with them in so many respects. He could not help fearing that the great difference between the value of labour here and on the Continent, must be attended by serious consequences. On account of the comparatively high rate of wages in this country, our exports must be confined to goods manufactured by means of machinery, and to articles on which little labour had been expended; while we should receive in return manufactures, the chief value of which consisted in their workmanship. Little attention had been paid to this subject in the course of that debate. He hoped the House would not be led away by vague assertions, which had been made by several hon. Members, about increased employment and better wages; but look seriously into the means of employment which this description of traffic must withdraw from our rapidly increasing population. In regard to agriculture, he apprehended a similar displacement of employment; and for this reason, that the amount of labour required for the production of corn, was greater than that which was required for the manufacture of those articles which it was proposed to exchange for the corn of the Continent. It was well known, that in every operation of husbandry the labour of man was largely employed; whereas in steam-woven cotton goods, everything from first to last was performed by machinery with compara-

tively little assistance from the operative; and the raw material was chiefly imported from a foreign and not very friendly land. We thus displaced our own industry, and transferred it not only to the country from which we imported our corn, but also to America, from whence we imported our cotton. He held it to be utterly impossible that the farmers of this country could go on paying the wages they had been accustomed to pay, and compete with the farmers in more favourable climates, who paid their labourers from 3*s* to 4*s*. a week. No one would seriously pretend that they could. The hon. Member for Stroud said, we already competed with the cheap labour of Ireland; but the supply from that part of the kingdom was limited; it did not materially affect prices, and could not, therefore, affect wages. The hon. Member who had just addressed the House, stated that the speech of the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, had at first caused great alarm in the county he represented. He (Mr. Lockhart) thought that the speech of the hon. Baronet the Member for Southwark was still more calculated to excite uneasiness. He (Sir W. Molesworth) admitted that the class of small farmers must be swept away. Now he would ask—was Ireland prepared for that measure? He knew that in the county he had the honour to represent, the effect would be strongly felt. There were upwards of two thousand small farmers in it, not, generally speaking, possessed of much capital, but deficient neither in skill nor industry. Their most experienced and best-informed farmers, were of opinion that their inferior lands must go to ruin. He had seen the greatest part of them brought into cultivation; and if this measure passed, he was destined, probably, to see their return into the state from which they were reclaimed; for these lands, when left in grass, rapidly deteriorated, and in a few years became valueless. As this was a subject in regard to which great misapprehension existed, he would take the liberty to read a single sentence from a letter he had received from a neighbour of his, a practical farmer, and a great admirer of the right hon. Baronet. It was as follows:—

"If Sir R. Peel carries his intended Corn Bill, it will ruin this part of the country. A great part of our inferior land must go out of cultivation; and if allowed to remain in grass, it will get into a wild state in a very few years."

In short, the right hon. Baronet was putting the science and industry of our farmers to too severe a test, and many of them must sink under it. "Agriculture," said the right Baronet, "even here is in its infancy." Be it so. Would not, then, any improvements that might be introduced, tell with double effect in countries that were immeasurably behind us? And if our liberality did not stimulate foreign farmers to greater exertions, were there not among themselves those who would take advantage of the lower rate of wages abroad, and set them an example? for they had no want of speculators. Were the price of labour equal, or nearly equal, they need fear nothing from competition; and in the course of time it must become so: when the principle of buying in the cheapest market had come fully into operation, as the price of every thing else fell, the price of labour must sink also. This was a melancholy prospect for the industrious classes; but it was, he feared, the inevitable consequence of a measure of this kind. It was indeed a hazardous experiment; but he sincerely hoped he might be mistaken, and that the policy which brought ruin to ancient Rome, might bring prosperity to the British Empire. Such he most devotedly believed were the anticipations of the Government. Might it prove that they were wiser than the majority of their friends!

Sir G. CLERK said, that he very unwillingly obtruded himself upon the attention of the House; but he could not allow this question, considering the situation which he had the honour to hold, to be disposed of without saying a few words; at the same time he did not presume to think he could add much to what had been already said. The hon. Momber for Shrewsbury had told the House that the objections to the measures were two-fold—one founded upon the non-existence of an emergency, the other upon the construction of a new system of policy. As to the existence of the emergency, he believed that that was a position which could not be successfully contested, and which it was really unnecessary to debate at any length. In discussing the other ground of objection, the hon. Member for Shrewsbury told them that the present measure went to the construction of a new system of commercial policy. Now he denied that altogether. The present proposition was nothing more than a following out of that system which was introduced by his right hon. Friend in 1842, and a development of

those measures supported by him in 1824, when they were brought forward by Mr. Huskisson and Lord Ripon, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. They had been told then that the Government and the Parliament had run wild upon the subject of free trade. The propositions of that day were so described, but they were carried out; and if hon. Members would only view calmly the measures now proposed, they would see that they went very little beyond the principles which had been acted upon for the last twenty years, and that there was really no intention of introducing a new system of commercial policy. With regard to the emergency, he wished he could consider it, as some hon. Gentlemen did, temporary. In this debate they had looked too exclusively to the misery in Ireland which would prevail during the present summer; but they must look further—they must look what the crop of potatoes, which he was sorry to say was the sole food of 4,000,000 of the people there, would be in the subsequent years of 1847 and 1848, because they must bear in mind not only that the crop of the present year was destroyed, but that there would be the greatest difficulty in obtaining sufficient seed for future culture. ["Hear, hear!"] Did the hon. Member doubt that statement? If he did, perhaps he was not in the House when a question was put by the hon. Member for Cockermouth (Mr. Horsman) to the right hon. Baronet near him (Sir R. Peel). He Sir G. Clerk) had himself made some inquiries among his own neighbours, and he had been told by men of great intelligence, though the disease did not exist to the same extent last spring, yet that there had been symptoms of it, and, as they had not been sufficiently careful as to the potatoes they had used for seed, there was reason to believe that the seed sown did contain the germ of the disease last year. He thought that, after what Professor Lindley had communicated to the right hon. Baronet, and what had been by him stated to the House, there was reason to apprehend that the disease would not be confined to the present season; and that even supposing they could procure seed to be sown for next year, the disease would prevail. But it was not only to Ireland they were to look in considering the means of obtaining a sufficient supply of food for the present year: although the potato was not the exclusive food, it did form a great part of the food of the people of Scotland and of England. Now, the disease had been found to prevail to a great extent in every part of the United Kingdom. He knew that different parties did not agree on the precise extent of the injury. It varied in different districts, and on one farm from another, so that, according to the place where the question was asked, very different ideas might be entertained of the extent to which the disease prevailed; but there was one test by which they might approximate to the truth. In England the potato formed a great portion of the food of the lower orders: it did so especially in the metropolis. What did hon. Members suppose the supply of potatoes for London was this year compared with the last? From the 1st of October, 1844, to the 14th of February, 1845, being a period of four months and a-half, the supply of potatoes to London was 770,000 sacks; whilst the supply of London for the same period from the 1st of October, 1845, to the 14th of February instant, was only 540,000 sacks, showing a falling-off of nearly one-third in the supply of the metropolis. He believed he might take this as a fair index of the failure throughout England generally; and if they contemplated the deficiency of supply of potatoes in Manchester and Liverpool and a great many other towns, where a large portion of the population was Irish, they might imagine the distress that would exist. What effect had this defective supply of London on the prices? At the end of January, 1845, the price of potatoes in Covent-garden market, by the ton, was from 50*s.* to 80*s.*; and if they looked at the price at the end of January, 1846, they would find it ran from 80*s.* up to 160*s*, a ton; so that the lowest price now was equal to the highest price in the former year, and the highest price now was double what it wat last year. He knew if they took the water-side price it might be found somewhat lower, for many cargoes of diseased potatoes were brought to market, and of course sold at a low rate; indeed, at the present moment, it depended on the state of the wind, and a prosperous passage from the Humber or the Tay, whether the cargo would arrive in a sound state or not. Potatoes by this price had been placed beyond the reach of the lower classes, who had consequently been obliged to purchase bread to a greater extent than they were used to do in former years. Those bakers who supplied the poorer districts, who used to bake ten

sacks a week, were now baking eleven, so that there was an increased consumption of bread of 10 per cent. When, therefore, we had been importing corn during the last six years to a great extent—when they found that the food of 4,000,000 of the people in Ireland would be cut off at the end of the next two months, and that the consumption of bread had been increased 10 per cent. already, even in the metropolis—and when it was highly probable that this diminished supply of potatoes that came to the metropolis could not hold out till the end of May, it was the duty of the Government to look out and see that there were no impediments to a sufficient supply of food. He must now advert to another remarkable feature of this case. It was well known that although the harvest of last year had not been deficient in bulk upon an average, it had been deficient in weight; and an additional quantity of wheat was now required to produce a given quantity of flour. Now, at the same time that the potato disease had not been confined to Great Britain and Ireland, but had extended itself to the whole of the Continent, it was also known the harvest in Germany and other parts of Europe had failed to a great extent likewise. Holland and Belgium had at once removed all impediments to the admission of food in their ports. At that time, when corn was so admitted into the ports of those countries free, it had been found that though the price of corn in the London markets was exceedingly high—though the best wheat was remaining stationary, or rather rising—the averages were moving in the opposite direction. That was in the month of November. The attention of the Government had been most anxiously directed to this difficulty. From week to week the accounts of the quantity of corn coming in were compared with the accounts of the quantities which from week to week were re-exported. The amount so re-exported continued trifling; but had it increased, it would have been the bounden duty of Government to open the ports, as a means of preventing the corn from being taken away from this country to those which had removed all impediments upon its importation. Under such circumstances he thought he might assume that there would have been but one feeling in the House—that the Government would have been justified in taking upon itself the heavy and delicate responsibility of opening the ports and admitting corn. But if this point was admitted, and if such was the opinion of the agricultural Members, that admission took away from him the main and chief argument upon which he had ever been prepared to defend the sliding-scale, because the great argument in favour of that scale had been that it contained within itself a self-adjusting principle—that the duty should fall with a rise in price, until it vanished altogether. If hon. Gentlemen would refer to the arguments used in favour of the sliding-scale in 1827, and having regard to the circumstances of the autumn of 1826, they would find we had been nearly in a similar position in the autumn of 1845. The Government of Lord Liverpool had been obliged to open the ports and suspend the law. They had come to Parliament, and had asked for a Bill of Indemnity; and having made out a sufficient case the Parliament had passed their Bill. Lord Liverpool had then remarked that this power of opening the ports was of so delicate a nature that it required to be exercised with the greatest caution and care; that it might occasion loss and ruin to many unoffending and innocent persons; that it was a power which ought not to remain with the Government; and that some alteration should be made to render it unnecessary. Mr. Canning had also shown most forcibly that under the Corn Law then in force, there was no security against a recurrence of similar circumstances which might make it imperative on the Government to assume the power of dispensing with the law; and that this objection was not only applicable to the law of 1815, but to a fixed duty, however small. That had been the great argument in favour of a sliding-scale, for in a commercial point of view it was liable to many palpable objections; but now, here was a case in 1845, when the sliding-scale had failed in this respect of adjusting the duty in proportion to the price. The law not answering its purpose in this respect, it would have been the duty of Government, had they opened the ports, to do as Lord Liverpool had done in 1827, when he asked for indemnity, namely, to have been prepared to show how the existing law might be modified and altered so as to prevent the recurrence of this evil. An hon. Member had said that all that was required was an alteration in the mode of taking the averages; but upon this point he would rather take the opinion of a representative of the agricultural interest, the hon. Member for Somersetshire, who had said that there was no middle course, and

that he would rather have that proposed by the Government, if the Corn Laws were to be touched ["No, no!"] The hon. Member for Somersetshire was not now in his place, and it was possible he might be mistaken; but he had a distinct recollection of the hon. Member saying that there was no middle course. The hon. Member had followed shortly after the hon. Member for Huntingdon, who thought there was a middle course open, but received so little encouragement from Gentlemen who had cheered other parts of his speech, that he had not been induced to state to the House what that middle term was. But the hon. Member for Somerset had stated his opinion that there was no middle course, but that if the existing Corn Law was to be disturbed, it was far better that the measure of the Government should be adopted. Very few of the agricultural Members had entered into details to show the nature and extent of the injury they apprehended; but the hon. Member for Somersetshire had been an exception, for he had quoted some statistics, and had expressed his alarm at the quantity of corn likely to be brought from various parts of the world, and he particularized Russia; but it was well known that in reality a very small portion of the crops in the southern provinces of that empire consisted of wheat: they were principally rye, hemp, and tobacco. During ten years of deficient supply of corn at home, we had been obliged to ransack the whole world; and even then wheat could only be had at a great price. If hon. Members would look at the accounts on the Table, they would see that 120,000 quarters only was the average importation from Russia during the last ten years; and even in 1840, 317,000 quarters were all that could be had from that country. The Government availed themselves of the best information on this subject from our consular agents abroad. Returns had been obtained from different individuals and at several different periods of time; and it was a very remarkable fact, that nearly all of them concurred in the general result. From that information it appeared that the utmost quantity of wheat to be expected from Russia was 670,000 quarters, which was supposing that Great Britain obtained the whole surplus of that country; for some Gentlemen argued as if Great Britain was the only country wanting wheat; whereas they would find that in reality a very small portion of the surplus of these corn-growing countries came into England, and that if we went into the market, other countries would compete with us, the consequence of which would be, that the price would be raised to the English level by such competition, instead of the English price being reduced to the continental level. With respect to America, there was no greater mistake than to suppose that we were likely to receive very large supplies of corn from that country. By a reference to the Papers on the Table of the House, it would be seen that the United States exported in 1790 and 1793, when the population was four millions, a larger quantity of corn than she had ever done since, except in 1840, when the preceding harvest of 1839 had been remarkably abundant. But of the corn exported by America in that year a very small part found its way into the English markets. The population of America in 1840 was calculated at upwards of 17,000,000*l.*; the crop of wheat in that year was estimated at ten million quarters. Of those ten millions America exported 215,000 quarters in the shape of wheat, and 1,897,000 barrels of flour, which, subtracted from the total quantity, left only about four bushels per head for the consumption of their own population. Now, of that quantity exported from America only 620,000 barrels of flour came into England in 1840, the year in which there was the greatest importation. In the next year, 1841, America exported only 108,000 quarters of wheat, and 1,500,000 barrels of flour; and in 1842 her exports were 140,000 quarters of wheat, and 1,100,000 barrels of flour. The population of America was now about 20,000,000, and it was supposed that she could export little more than half the wheat she had sent out in 1840, still leaving a supply for her own people not greater than four bushels per head. With regard to the Eastern States of America, the fact was, they scarcely produced a sufficient supply of corn for their own population; and this being true—and that it was true was notorious to all who knew anything of the matter—it was clear that there could be nothing more absurd or untenable than the apprehension that from that quarter of the world, at all events, a supply of grain was to come in such exorbitant profusion as to glut the home market. Indeed, he believed that the apprehension would be found to be totally without foundation as regarded the United States generally; for circumstanced as those States were at present, and as they were likely to continue, with respect to

their commercial relations, and the vast calls which their own population made upon their home market, it was in the last degree improbable that they would ever be in a position to export corn in sufficient quantities to injure the growers of any other country whatsoever. The United States already supplied Brazil and the West India islands with flour; and as the demand for the article had enormously increased, and was still increasing in the latter countries since the emancipation of the slave population—which, by the way, was a most gratifying fact—the possibility of our receiving any very considerable supply of corn from the other side of the Atlantic was rendered more and more unlikely. In fact, he regarded it as a contingency so extremely improbable, that it might fairly be considered as almost entirely out of the question. Nay, he viewed the matter in another aspect altogether—in an aspect which, he must say, he considered as a much more alarming one than that in which it was viewed by the hon. Member for Somersetshire; for he could not help thinking that the actual state of things being such as he had described it to be, hon. Gentlemen, instead of indulging in an apprehension that our home market would be inundated with foreign corn, ought to apply themselves to the consideration of this question, whether, if our population were to continue to progress at the ratio in which it had of late years been advancing, we should be enabled, even though the resources of Russia and some other countries were to be developed to the very utmost, to procure a sufficient supply of corn for our own people. Within the last five years there had been imported into this country nearly ten millions of corn, being an average of two millions per annum; and surely there was no one who would venture to allege, that the people of this country had in that period been over-fed. Let the resources of Russia be developed to what extent they might, even though it were to that extent the prospect of which caused so much pain and alarm to the hon. Member for Somersetshire; and let it be taken for granted, that during the ten years preceding 1856, the importation of foreign corn was to average 3,000,000 quarters per annum, instead of 2,000,000 as heretofore—it would still be found that a larger supply had not been brought in than was absolutely necessary for the support of the people; and, furthermore, it would be found (he ventured confidently to predict it) that notwithstanding all this vast importation, not one single acre of land would be thrown out of cultivation; but that, on the contrary, agriculture would receive a fresh impetus, and that the demand upon the home market would still be very much greater than the supply. This was his deliberate opinion; and he had not the slightest doubt but that the result would show that he was a true prophet, rather than those who apprehended that the agriculture of this country would be discouraged, and large tracts of land be thrown out of cultivation if all restrictions on the corn trade were removed. The experience of the last thirty years proved that the rate of population advanced more rapidly than the rate of production; and that this was true was attested by the fact, that for a long series of years, we had every year been compelled to increase our importations of foreign corn in proportion as we approached more closely to the present time; and bearing in mind this fact, the truth of which was not to be contested, he could not help thinking—no matter how vigorously, no matter how scientifically, the arts of agriculture might be applied to the enrichment of the soil—that ten years hence we would be compelled to import 3,000,000 of quarters of corn annually instead of two, which had been required for the last five years. It was a favourite argument with hon. Gentlemen who were averse to the repeal of the Corn Laws, that the sliding-scale had this merit at least, that it prevented, or, at all events, materially checked, the fluctuation of the market; but the fact was, it had not produced a steadiness of price. The fluctuation of the market had been considerably greater under the sliding-scale than it was in the period intervening between the years 1786 and 1792—the period when the corn trade of this country was the least trammelled by restrictions. This he considered a very valuable fact, and one highly interesting for the purposes of this discussion. The hon. Member for Sunderland, when expatiating on the probability of our being subjected to an inundation of foreign corn, had spoken of the facilities for speculating in that article, and had alluded to the circumstance of his having himself, in the year 1837, imported into this country a quantity of foreign corn at so small a cost as 25*s.* per quarter. He had no doubt that the fact was just as the hon. Member had stated it, but it was capable of a very easy and natural explanation. Look at the state of the

corn trade at home and abroad in the year '37. During the years '34, '35, and '36, we had a succession of good harvests, and consequently imported little or nothing. In the month of August, '37, it was ascertained that the crop on the Continent was an excellent one, and the crop in England was likewise very abundant, for the summer had everywhere been warm and genial. The consequence was, that all the markets here and on the Continent were well stocked. He held in his hand an authentic document, prepared at the period to which he alluded (August, 1837), and by a reference to it he found that at that time the Hamburgh market was so low that corn had fallen to a price varying from 22*s.* 4*d.* to 29*s.* 4*d.* per quarter, and that the rate of freight was only 2*s.* 6*d.* Now he could very well conceive that the hon. Member, if inclined to speculate at all, might have done so in this manner. He might have purchased a small parcel of corn, of a very inferior description, indeed, at 22*s.* 4*d.* or thereabout, and after paying 2*s.* 6*d.* for freight, nothing was more natural than that he might have had the article for the cost he specified; but would the hon. Member tell the House that this was a thing that could be done every, or indeed to a very great extent in any, year? Mark what a revolution took place in the corn market the very next year. The crop on the Continent, in 1838, was an average one; but it was the reverse of abundant in England, the summer having been cold and moist. The fact that the English people had not been blessed with a very rich harvest soon became widely circulated, and the consequence was that, in the month of August, 1838, wheat rose at Hamburgh, from 22*s.* 4*d.* to 63*s.* 9*d.*, and freight from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 6*s.* and 8*s.* The hon. Member for Sunderland had not given the House to understand that, in the year 1838, he imported any corn at 25*s.* per quarter, or even at double that price. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury had argued that the rule of commerce was, that in proportion as the demand for an article increased, the price fell; but he (Sir G. Clerk) contended that the history of commerce proved that the contrary fact was usually realized. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury quoted the price of tea in support of his novel theory, stating, that though a much larger quantity of tea was now imported, the price in this country was lower. The price had since been reduced to the consumer; but the fact was not to be attributed to the increase in the demand. Were there no other reasons for a fall in the price of tea during the last ten or twelve years? Could the House forget, that during that period the trade to China had been thrown open, and that the restrictions under which the East India Company were required to conduct that trade had been removed. While the monopoly of the Company existed, they were obliged at all times to retain in store in this country a stock equal to a whole year's consumption; and the manner in which their periodical sales of tea were conducted, was frequently very inconvenient to the dealer in this country. Now, in consequence of the opening of the trade, freights from China had been greatly reduced. The importations of tea were not now, as formerly, confined to the port of London; the consequence of the removal of these and other restrictions, had been to reduce the price of tea to the consumers in this country, while at the same time the increased demand had had the effect of raising the price at Canton. The prices in 1844 had been so exorbitant, as materially to check the purchase of tea; and it was not till the beginning of 1845, that large purchases had been made; and even then at prices much above those which prevailed in 1832, before the trade was thrown open. There was reason, however, to hope, that a trade in tea might be established in some of the other ports of China, and that the breaking up of the monopoly hitherto enjoyed by the merchants at Canton might enable us to obtain tea at more moderate prices than had been of late demanded. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury had referred to the cotton trade as also affording an illustration of the truth of his doctrine, that, according as the demand for an article increased, the price fell; and he had instanced the fact that, in certain parts of the United States, cotton might now be had for three cents a pound. This statement, however, should be received with caution. He believed that cotton of a very inferior quality might be sold for that sum. He was given to understand that in New Orleans cotton of that description might be had for three cents per pound; but the latest commercial advices that we had received from New Orleans showed that good cotton, so far from being sold there for that sum, fetched so high a price as from six and a half to nine cents per pound. That was the actual price of the article at the present time in New Orleans. It was very possible that, owing to a stagnation of trade, or

some other of those unfortunate casualties to which all branches of commerce were subject, a fall in the price of the article might have taken place in 1837; but that fall was only of a temporary character; and the indisputable fact was, that, so far from our manufacturers being able to purchase cotton at three cents per pound, they were obliged to pay a price for it ranging from six and a half to nine cents per pound. And there was no knowing what price it might yet attain; for there could be no doubt but that the merchants at New Orleans were narrowly watching the policy England was now about to adopt, and would model their own policy accordingly. The doctrines of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, he had no hesitation in saying, were totally untenable, and would not endure one moment's investigation. The mind of the hon. Member appeared to be tortured by the most dreadful apprehension of coming evil; but he (Sir G. Clerk) confidently trusted that the event would prove there was no ground whatever for such apprehensions. Alarm would always be excited whenever it was proposed to make any change, even the most trivial, in the commercial policy of this country. In the year 1787, when Mr. Pitt first brought forward his proposition to regulate the importation of corn from Ireland, the Scotch agriculturists were in an agony of alarm, and predicted that the corn trade and the agricultural interests generally of Scotland would be irretrievably ruined; but he was proud and happy to say that, notwithstanding this gloomy prophecy, in no part of the United Kingdom had the science of agriculture been prosecuted with more signal success than in Scotland, nor did he know of any portion of the Empire in which there had been a greater increase of rents to landlords since 1787. He ventured to predict that results equally happy would follow from the adoption of the measures now in contemplation; but let not the House be surprised at finding that apprehension and alarm existed in many quarters with regard to the effect of the measures of Her Majesty's Government, similar to what past experience had shown us had always taken place when any change had been proposed. As far back as the year 1820, a petition was presented to that House from some of the most eminent merchants in London, praying for the removal of those protective restrictions which cramped the energies of trade and commerce. The Government of Lord Liverpool, in the year 1824, acted on these recommendations, and brought in various measures with a view to the mitigation of the prohibitory system; but it was a notorious fact that, with respect to every one of these mitigatory measures, the same alarm was manifested, and the same gloomy forebodings were indulged in. At that time, the amount of the protective duty on linen was not very great, but a bounty was given on the exportation of linens from this country; and when it was proposed to do away with this bounty, the Irish Members rose with the utmost indignation, and declared that the reduction would be the absolute destruction of the Irish manufactures. He well remembered that the hon. Member for Londonderry expressly declared, that if the contemplated reduction were to be carried into effect, the linen and cambric trade of Ireland would be irretrievably ruined. Such was the prediction of the Member for Londonderry; but had the House forgotten the statement made by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, in the course of his masterly speech of that day week, by which he showed, on the authority of some of the most eminent linen manufacturers residing in the neighbourhood of Belfast, that their prosperity dated from the year 1826, and that, notwithstanding the removal of protection, they had been able not only to compete with France, but to send their fabrics in enormous quantities to the remotest countries of the world, and especially to the United States? So much for the linen trade. His (Sir George Clerk's) right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel), in the course of his speech, had summed all up in this way—"We reduced a great number of these things; we made further reductions in 1842; and now I call upon any Member—I call upon any person—who is connected with trade, to show us where it has suffered injury by the reduction." That challenge, then, remained unanswered. At last, the hon. Member for Birmingham took the field, and he referred to the article of spelter or zinc. He (Sir G. Clerk) had heard with great astonishment the declaration of the hon. Member, that the zinc trade had suffered from the change that had taken place; but he confessed he could not find out from his statement in what manner, or how, the manufacturers of zinc had been injured. He said, when the price of zinc was 75*l.* a ton, the duty was 45*l.* a ton. [Mr. MUNTZ: Oh, no! I beg your pardon.] He would take it at 50*l.*

a ton.; the duty was as high as 50*l.* a ton, and the price of the article was 75*l.* That duty was gradually reduced, and last year they took off the duty. He appealed to the knowledge of every Member of the House, whether the manufacture of zinc was not one of the most recent origin; and it was only within a few years the means were discovered of rendering zinc malleable, and readily converting it to any useful purpose. Formerly, they were dependent exclusively on the mines of this country for a supply of that description of zinc that was used for the mixing of copper as an alloy for making brass. The description of spelter or zinc found in this country was so brittle, that it could not be converted into those articles into which zinc was now manufactured. It was the foreign zinc that was susceptible of being made malleable. Large mines were discovered in the Prussian provinces, and large quantities of that zinc had been brought here; and by the admission of that zinc, an entirely new branch of manufactures was established. By that means, employment was given to many hundreds of persons; whereas if the prohibitory duties had been maintained, the proprietors of those inconsiderable mines from which the inferior quality of zinc was procured, might have retained the price of 75*l.* per ton, and that zinc might have been used for the manufacture of brass; but then the country would have been deprived of the means of manufacturing those zinc articles. The hon. Member wound up his statement by this assertion: he said zinc was now 50*l.* per ton, and that it was not worth any man's while to work up that zinc, for every article of it, with trifling exceptions, was brought from abroad. Now, what was the fact? They had last year a statement of the duties on every article: the duty on manufactured spelter was 10 per cent., and the whole value of the article brought in was 5*l.*, and the duty was 10*s.* 6*d.* Now, what had been the profits of the zinc manufacture in this country? He need go back only a few years, for the manufacture of zinc was but recently introduced. In the years 1843 and 1844, the quantity of zinc imported was 10,000 tons, and of that between 5,000 and 6,000 tons were exported to India and China, and 4,000 tons were retained to be worked up in manufactures in this country. In the last year, 12,000 tons were imported; and of that 2,000 tons only were exported, and 10,000 tons were worked up into manufactures. By means of that manufacture, a very useful and valuable article could be obtained at a moderate price, and employment was given to a great number of persons. Neither had the trade in British spelter been destroyed; for the fact was, that in addition to what was required for making brass in this country, no less than 1500 tons of British spelter had been exported in 1844. The hon. Member for Birmingham ought, from his position, to be well acquainted with this subject; but yet he said that the measures of the Government were productive of injury. He (Sir G. Clerk) would next refer to the observations of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury. His right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) had said, that so far from the silk trade having been injured by the reduction of duty, the quantity of raw silk imported had more than doubled since the restriction was taken of. No, said the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, for the right hon. Baronet has taken into his calculation waste silk and thrown silk. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury said, that they had nothing to do with them; and he then stated, that twenty years ago, in the last year of protection, the quantity of raw silk introduced was 4,010,000 lbs.; and that in 1844 it did not exceed 4,020,000. Now, he found that the silk imported in 1824 stood thus: —raw silk imported, 3,414,520; waste silk, 133,257; thrown silk, 462,731; making about 4,011,000 lbs., the quantity quoted by the hon. Member; and, therefore, the quantity of silk which was stated by him to have been imported in 1824 included waste and thrown silks. That was the quantity imported in 1824; in 1844 the quantity of raw silk imported was 4,021,000; waste silk, 707,850; thrown silk,410,358; making above 6,000,000 lbs. The hon. Member, when he made a statement of figures, was bound in both cases to take the same items; for he came down there to make a business speech, throwing aside all those sallies with which he amused the House on former occasions. The hon. Member said he would take the year 1824, the last year of protection. He (Sir G. Clerk) thought he might, with more propriety, claim 1829 as the first year of free trade. In the month of February, in that year, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced to the House certain plans, including a proposition for the reduction of duty on raw silk, and the removal of the prohibition on the manufacture. An objection was taken to the introduction of the silk manufacture; but

there was only one feeling in the House as to the propriety of immediately taking the duty off raw silk. On the 7th of March the House agreed to the Resolution, and on the 25th of March, in that year, the duty was taken off. Therefore, it was perfectly clear that as the subject had engrossed the attention of both Houses of Parliament in the former year, and a great change was universally expected, the year 1824 was naturally a year of great excitement and speculation as far as the importation of raw silk was concerned; and, in fact, in making any comparison of the past and present state of the silk trade, it ought to be left out of the account. The only true criterion to be taken in a thing of that sort was to take an average, and to see what was the effect of free trade, and what was the effect of protection and high duty. Let them compare the import of raw silk prior to 1824 with what it was subsequent to that period. For ten years previous to 1824 the average was 1,524,000 lbs. For ten years, from 1825 to 1834 inclusive, the average was 3,000,000 lbs. per annum, instead of 1,500,000 as before; and taking ten years, from 1836 to 1845 inclusive, gave him an average of 3,865,000 lbs., as compared with 1,500,000, presenting an increase of 150 per cent.; and in stating these figures, he had confined himself to the quantities of raw silk, excluding throughout the quantities of waste and thrown silk; though if those had been included, the result in favour of the system of free trade would have appeared greater. The result, therefore, was to increase the silk manufactures of this country to the extent he had mentioned; and, instead of throwing any persons out of employment, employment had been given to a greater number of silk weavers and other persons engaged in the silk trade by the removal of that duty. The hon. Member said he was for free trade, as he understood free trade. He was for a free interchange of the commodities of different countries. He desired, he said, that they should interchange their commodities on the same terms with France and America, as they were willing to interchange with them; but, said he, there are hostile tariffs against us, and are we prepared to fight hostile tariffs with free imports? With reference to this observation, he (Sir G. Clerk) would remind him that those changes were proposed to be made, not with reference to their effect upon foreign countries, but for the benefit of the community of England. If they required those articles which were produced in other countries, were they to deprive the people of this country of the use of them, because some foreign nations said they would not take in exchange articles of British manufacture? Russia, he said, had a prohibitory tariff, and would not take our articles; while facilities were given for the introduction of Russian tallow into this country. But the fact was, that the people of this country would not buy the Russian tallow except they wanted it. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury said, as you have no direct market for your productions with Russia, the British manufacturer is obliged to have recourse to an indirect and circuitous course: he is obliged to send an extra quantity of goods to the Brazils and elsewhere, to enable him to find returns for the Russia market; and that consequently a heavy loss is sustained. That is in fact, we had to pay this additional price for the products of Russia. But how was the British consumer benefited, if, in addition to the enhanced cost above alluded to, he had to pay a heavy tax in this country before he could introduce the hemp, iron, or tallow, which were required to enable the shipowner of this country to build or fit out his ships? Those Members who entertained the same views as the Member for Shrewsbury, and who at the same time professed to take a deep interest in the prosperity of the shipping of this country, would do well to consider, whether the course of policy which they espoused would not greatly increase the difficulties of the shipping interest in meeting foreign competition. It certainly must be a matter of regret that the countries from which they imported so largely so many articles necessary for the interests of this country, should persevere in having prohibitory tariffs. They should hope, however, that those other countries—not only from their example, but also from experience—would see, that the most efficient means of increasing the revenue would be by having a moderate duty substituted for prohibition. The hon. Member had said that without diplomacy they would get nothing from France—that they might reduce their duties as much as they pleased, but that it would not produce any advantage for the manufactures of this country. Let them see what was the experience of the last twenty years. In 1826 the policy was to remove the prohibitory duties on French silks and gloves. In 1828 the duty on French wines was reduced from

13*s.* 9*d.* to 7*s.* 7*d.*, and in 1832 to 5*s.* 6*d.* Madder, on which the duty was 12*s.*, was allowed to come in free. The duty on flax was altogether removed. The duty on cambrics was reduced from 11*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* The duty on cloverseed, of which we got a considerable quantity from France, was reduced one-half. The duty on kid skins and other dressed skins was removed. The Government of France, it is true, had not during the same period relaxed any of their restrictions against British commerce; but the demands of the people of France baffled the diplomatists and legislatures; and our exports, from the very moment of the reduction of duties on our part, had been progressively increasing, and now exceeded by six times the amount in 1824. The declared value of the exports of British manufactures to France was—

In 1830	475,000*l.*
1831	620,000*l.*
1832	674,000*l.*
1833	848,000*l.*
1834	1,116,000*l.*
1835	1,450,000*l.*
1836	1,591,000*l.*
1837	1,642,000*l.*
1838	2,314,000*l.*
1839	2,298,000*l.*
1840	2,378,000*l.*
1841	2,902,000*l.*
1842	3,193,000*l.*
1843	2,534,000*l.*
1844	2,650,000*l.*

The average of five years, from 1830, was 750,000*l.*, and the average of the last five years was 2,700,000*l.* If he wanted then to select an instance to show that we might satisfactorily fight a hostile tariff with free imports, he could not have a better one than that of France. Judging then from past experience, there was every reason to believe that the changes now proposed were not likely to be attended with calamitous consequences, any more than the changes which had taken place at former periods. He had endeavoured to grapple with the facts of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, and trusted he had satisfied the House that they were incorrect in every particular. The hon. Member said that he was in favour of free trade, provided it could be got by diplomacy. He said that it was the duty of the Minister of this country to see that he did not give any advantage to a foreign country without an equivalent; and, above all, that nothing should be done which would, in the slightest degree, lessen the preponderance of the landed interest. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury would not admit foreign goods except some equivalent advantage were granted to the produce of this country; but, if any equivalent concession were made, then he was for free trade. If Prussia would admit our manufacturers free of duty, then he would be for the free admission of Prussian corn; that is, if he could make a good bargain for the admission of linen and cotton goods into Prussia, he would throw over protection to agriculture. Such being the necessary inference from the premises of the hon. Member, he doubted whether the agricultural Members would select him as their champion. He was as anxious as any one that the proper influence of the landlords and the landed interest should be upheld; but if the hon. Member meant by this, that it was to depend on the maintenance and continuance of the present Corn Laws, he would only say, that he could not agree to such a principle; and he did not believe that such an argument was for the advantage of the landed interest. He believed that it would be a most dangerous argument to put forward, that the Corn Laws must be kept up for the purpose of keeping up the influence of the landed interest. A statement had often been made to this effect on the other side, and it had been said that the Corn Laws had been adhered to for the purpose of benefiting the landlords. This was an argument or assertion which he had always repudiated; and he certainly conceived the assumption of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury as objectionable, and the argument which he had used, if adopted, would lead to the most dangerous consequences. The only meaning which he could attach to the language of the hon. Member was, that the Corn Laws were to be maintained as absolutely necessary to keep up what he termed our territorial Constitution; or, in other words, for the sake of the landlords alone. He (Sir G. Clerk), as a landed proprietor, disclaimed such doctrine altogether. He was of opinion that the aristocracy and landed proprietors of this country were not indebted to any system of Corn Laws for that influence they possessed with all those who were in any way dependent on them. They had acquired that influence long before the existence of any Corn Law; and he trusted they would for ever retain it, though these laws were all swept away, while they continued, as they had always hitherto done, to receive the respect and affection of their poorer neighbours by ministering to their

comforts, supplying their wants, and improving their condition. He thought that the only just argument that could be used by the landed interest in favour of the Corn Laws, was, that the maintenance of these laws was not exclusively for their interest, but for the interests of all classes of the community. He felt that he had already trespassed too long on the attention of the House. In conclusion, he was ready to admit that he did not entertain the same opinions as to the effect of the repeal of these laws which he formerly did. He would only ask hon. Members to bestow the same pains to make themselves masters of the subject as he had done; and that they would disabuse their minds as to the effect of these laws. Hon. Gentlemen opposed to this measure were in the habit of saying that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government gave his opinion in 1839 and 1840 in favour of these laws, and had given the best arguments that could be used for their maintenance, and that they intended to rely upon such arguments; experience, however, had since convinced his right hon. Friend that he could not depend upon these arguments. He, therefore, thought hon. Gentlemen should seek for some new arguments. He hoped that those hon. Gentlemen who had formed opinions on the subject would state them, and give reasons for the conduct which they intended to pursue. He put it to hon. Gentlemen whether they would not best consult the interest of the parties they represented in that House, by at once assenting to the settlement of the question; the settlement of which, it was admitted on all hands, could not be long postponed. He put it to them to agree to accept a measure which was best adapted to promote the social, commercial, and political relations of the country; and calculated to promote the permanent well-being and best interests of all classes of the community.

Mr. MUNTZ said, that he wished to say a few words in explanation. The fact was that he had never found fault with the importation of foreign spelter, or with the reduction or removal of the duty. The reason why he alluded to the subject was, that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, in the course of his speech, stated that in no instance had the reduction or removal of a tax on a foreign article reduced the produce of the same article in this country. Now he was ready to show that that was not always the case, and he had mentioned spelter as an instance. He (Mr. Muntz) said, the other evening, that the whole of the spelter used in this country, up to the year 1816, was manufactured here. The price of the article at that time was about 75*l.* per ton. Shortly afterwards, in consequence of the reduction of the import duty on it, the price fell to 45*l.* a ton; and that, in consequence of further reductions in the duty, the price fell to 15*l.* a ton. He also said, that a few years ago only one manufacturer of spelter remained in this country, and that person had peculiar advantages in carrying on the trade, as he possessed the right of digging coals in the neighbourhood of his manufactory, and he therefore promised them at half their usual price. This house for many years was the only manufacturing zinc house in England, and that now no longer in existence. He had never objected to the reduction in, or the removal of the duty on foreign zinc; on the contrary, he thought that it was a very proper proceeding. He was far from even having said he thought that such a course was prejudicial to the general interests of the country. He yearly used 1,500 tons of zinc himself, and, of course, he gained by being enabled to purchase it cheaper. All that he meant to say was, that the reduction of the duty had had the effect of making the manufacture of this article in this country cease altogether.

Mr. LIDDELL observed that his right hon. Friend, who had just concluded his speech, made use of one of the boldest assertions which it had ever been his lot to hear, even in that House. The right hon. Gentleman said in the commencement of his speech that this measure was in fact no change in the policy of the Government. If that was the case, why did they go to the country in 1841 and protest against the policy of the noble Lord opposite? What were the three articles upon which that noble Lord proposed a change—a change, let him add, much more judicious than that now proposed by Her Majesty's Government—what but the three articles of corn sugar and timber? and if a change respecting them was desirable, why was the noble Lord now sitting on the Opposition bench? Why was the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland now engaged in an election contest, and in which he was likely to be rejected? Why had so many Members, from a conscentious feeling, resigned their seats in that House? Anything more startling than the assertion that by this measure they were only pursuing the same line of

policy which had been followed for the last twenty years, he had never heard—even from the Treasury Bench. The second proposition of the right hon. Baronet to which he wished to refer was, that those who were leading the opposition to these measures, should adduce reasons for the course they were pursuing. Ample reasons were already provided for that purpose. For that purpose they had nothing to do but to look to the speeches of the right hon. Gentlemen—the First Lord of the Treasury and the Secretary of State. By doing this they would find the arguments which would fully justify them in the course they had taken. The country had a right to look to the right hon. Baronet and the Government for reasons for the course they had adopted, and to remove the alarm which they had created; to reconcile their former policy with the measures which they now recommended, and to show that the fears of the agriculturists were unfounded, and that they had little to fear from the change. This he thought that they had a right to ask from the Government; but they had hitherto asked it in vain. When the right hon. Baronet had asked why no new arguments had been adduced to prove their case, he seemed to forget the speeches made from the benches near him, and more especially those by the hon. Members for Somersetshire and Radnorshire. His hon. Friend the Member for Radnorshire had, as carefully as possible, prepared documents showing the prices at which wheat could be obtained from the ports on the Baltic, and the charge at which it could be brought to this country, and also the quantity that could be obtained from the several ports in that sea. Now this speech, and the statements of his hon. Friend, induced him and many of his Friends around him to regard the establishment of a free trade in corn as being pregnant with danger. On the one hand, it was said, that it would lead to the most ruinous reduction in the price of wheat; on the other, it was stated by the right hon. Gentleman, it would not lead to any important reduction. Now if the latter was the case, what became of the argument which had been so often used against the agriculturists with the view of exciting a popular feeling, namely, that the Corn Laws made dear to the poor man that corn which Almighty God had provided for his sustenance? This argument was often addressed to public meetings with the view of exciting popular feeling; but what became of it if, as they were told by the right hon. Baronet, the removal of the Corn Laws would not cause any important reduction in the price of grain? With respect to the present law, he never knew a similar period to that in which it had been in force, in which there had been so trifling fluctuations in prices. When the right hon. Gentleman complained that he could not get any new arguments against the measure, he at any rate should have set the example, and adduced some new arguments in support of his new opinion. The speech, however, of the right hon. Gentleman was merely a repetition of that of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. He therefore should proceed to refer to some of the points in that speech. No doubt the speech was delivered with his characteristic power and eloquence, and could not fail to make a great impression on the House and the country. Nevertheless, in that speech there were some fallacies and inaccuracies, which he should endeavour to point out. He thought that the speech might be divided under three heads. The first part pointed out the direct causes which had led to a change of opinion on the part of the Government on this subject. Under the second head he vindicated the course which the Government had pursued. Under the third head he stated various facts, with the view of showing that the reduction or change of duties in other trades had had no injurious effects on those trades, and that this circumstance had induced Her Majesty's Government to change their opinions as to the effect of the removal of the Corn Laws. He would not go into the first two points, as they had been so ably dealt with by other hon. Members, and more especially by his hon. Friend the Member for North Devonshire. In referring to the cases stated by the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury, and restated that evening by the right hon. Baronet the Vice President of the Board of Trade, he would first allude to the silk trade. It was not necessary to him to go back to the former Acts of Parliament which ensured to the Spitalfields weavers all sorts of privileges, and were based on an actual prohibition of foreign silks. Such privileges could not be maintained in any trade; and though the silk trade had greatly increased under them, it could not be denied but that great distress frequently existed among the silk weavers during their continuance. But how was that prohibition of foreign silks met? It was met by the trade of the smuggler—by the importation of contraband goods. He

remembered when Mr. Huskisson stated in that House some remarkable facts on this subject. That right hon. Gentleman said that he had devoted considerable attention to the amount of foreign silks seized and confiscated in this country; and he found that during three years of the time that the importation of foreign silk was prohibited by law, the annual value of silk seized as contraband in this country, was not more than from 4,000*l.* to 5,000*l.* He stated also that he had made inquires, at the foreign custom-houses, to ascertain the value of silk which paid duty there on exportation to this country, and that the annual value of silk exported from France, to be brought to England through illicit channels, as cleared at the French custom-houses, was from 100,000*l* to 150,000*l.*, and that, it should be recollected, was exclusive of the large quantities of silk that had been brought here by other means, and without going through the Custom-house at all. These facts only proved that, in articles such as silk and lace, it was impossible to maintain a total prohibition. But the question with regard to these trades was not one between prohibition and free trade, because the right hon. Baronet proposed to retain protective duties in their favour to the amount, he believed of 15 per cent. *ad valorem*, which was probably the exact rate that would keep out contraband goods, and at the same time maintain protection to the home manufacturer. The right hon. Baronet, therefore, maintained protection in favour of these articles; and while he did so, he (Mr. Liddell) could not see why he should object to continue protection in favour of other articles also. He could not understand why protection should be maintained in some interests, and why the agricultural interest should be altogether deprived of it. The right hon. Baronet next went into the case of the timber trade, and took occasion to allude to the petition which he (Mr. Liddell) had the honour to present from the general society of shipowners of the port of London, against the proposed reduction of duties on foreign timber. The right hon. Baronet said he could not look at that petition without feeling ashamed of the petitioners, and their motives for presenting it. He was sure the right hon. Baronet did not mean to give offence to any gentlemen who felt it necessary to approach the House in what they believed to be the defence of their rights, property, and interests. In reply to the right hon. Baronet, it was necessary for him to state, in a few words, the real case of the British shipowners. The right hon. Baronet proposed to reduce the duty on Baltic timber from 25*s.* to 15*s.*; and, by doing so, he stated that he had no doubt of affording a better supply to the consumer at a diminished cost. There could be no doubt but that, partly from the judicious arrangements made by the right hon. Baronet in a former year, and partly from other causes unconnected with those measures, an immense stimulus had been given both to the timber trade and other branches of industry in this country. The demand for labour had been considerable, and the results to trade and commerce most gratifying. The British shipowners, no doubt, shared in this prosperity; but he would best state their case in the words of their own petition. They stated that it was of the last importance to the consumers of timber, that no monopoly of the supply of that indispensable article should be allowed; but that from the great distance of the Colonies, and from the consequent heavy cost of importing timber from thence, beyond the expense of importing timber from other countries, it was only by the protection of duties equivalent to the increased expense of importation from our colonial possessions, that the market in this country could be readily supplied with colonial timber in competition with that brought from the Baltic. They added, that the interests of the whole British public were involved, as well as the interests of the petitioners; and still more from the inevitable certainty that the greater part, if not the whole of the importation of timber from the Baltic, would, under the proposed duties, be ultimately thrown into the hands of foreign shipowners. That subject brought him to the consideration of the alleged incapacity of the British shipowner to compete with the shipowners of the north of Europe. On this point he should draw the attention of the House to the relative expenses of the British and foreign shipowners in navigating, in building, in victualling, and fitting out their vessels. He would take the returns from the Report of the Committee of that House that sat the year before last on the Shipping Interests. According to the evidence given before that Committee, it appeared that the relative cost of navigating British and foreign ships on a three months' voyage was, for the British ship, 169*l.* 10*s.*, and for the Prussian ship, engaged in the same trade, 81*l.* 14*s.*, being a difference of

88*l.* 5*s.* 6*d.*, or upwards of 100 per cent. in favour of the Prussian shipowner. Again, in the case of provisions. The victualling of the British ship amounted to 96*l.*, and of the Prussian ship only 31*l.* 19*s.*, being a difference of 56*l.*, or 140 per cent. in favour of the foreigner. Again, with regard to the cost of shipbuilding, the same differences would be found to exist. Ever since the framing of the navigation laws, the support of the British shipping trade was considered to be of paramount importance, and the public agreed to pay the additional price of increased protection, because they obtained security thereby. Even Adam Smith, with all his predilections for free trade, admitted that of all the restrictive policy adopted by this country, that of the navigation laws was the most justifiable. Now, in the port of London the wages of shipwrights had not varied for the last twenty-five years—the workmen declaring that they would rather starve than take less wages than 6*s.* a day. According to an official report lately published by the French Government, it appeared that the wages of shipwrights at Toulon was only one and a half francs a day; while in the dock-yards in this country the present amount of wages to shipwrights was 4*s.* 6*d.* a day. Foreign ships could under these circumstances be built at from 5*l.* to 6*l.* per ton; while at Sunderland vessels built there could not be got for less than 10*l.* per ton; and even these were not what were called first-class British ships. The first-class British ships built on the Thames sold at 16*l.* per ton, or, with all their fittings complete, at 21*l.* per ton. It was, therefore, evident that the British shipowners could not possibly contend against such unequal competition if all protection were withdrawn from them, and that the only mode by which they could do so would be, by bringing down the rate of wages paid to their workmen, and to all persons connected with them. The right hon. Baronet had asked were they to advance or to retrograde? He would answer by stating that if they were to advance by reducing the wages of their labourers and the condition of the people—if such were to be the results of free trade —then he thought the measure of the right hon. Baronet would be one of retrogression and not of advancement. But to return to the timber question. By the comparative returns of British and foreign tonnage engaged in the Baltic trade from 1842 to 1844, it appeared that the total tonnage entered inwards from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Russia, in the former year was 109,382 tons British, and 341,533 tons foreign. In 1844, which was a year of great activity under the Tariff duties of the right hon. Baronet, and when, whether there were any duties or not, the British shipping trade would no doubt maintain some degree of prosperity, the returns of this trade were as follows:—British, 130,170 tons; foreign, 528,722 tons; thus showing that while the increase in British shipping was 20,000 tons, or 19 per cent., the increase of foreign shipping was 187,189 tons, or 54 per cent. Now, what was the argument of the British shipowner on the subject of the Baltic timber trade? He said that he could not contend permanently with the owners of ships employed at so much a cheaper rate than his were; that he should be necessarily driven from the trade altogether, if obliged to enter into direct competition with the foreigner; and that the entire carrying trade from that quarter must therefore, *ex necessitate*, be thrown into the hands of the foreign trader. But it was said in reply that the British shipowner had the advantage of a monopoly in the coasting trade and the colonial trade. But by destroying the colonial timber trade the British shipowner would be driven altogether out of the market; and the result would be, that according as the supply of colonial timber decreased, the price of Baltic timber would rise, so that the consumer would, in the end, not benefit by the change. The right hon. Baronet stated, in the next place, that in the port of Liverpool there was not a ton of Baltic timber fit for the building of a first-class or a twelve years' ship. He could tell the right hon. Baronet that no Baltic timber whatever was used in the building of a twelve years' ship, so indifferent was that timber considered to be; the rule being to leave a ship on the first class for a length of time, proportioned to the quality of the timber used in her construction. First-class ships were built of British oak, or African teak; and the right hon. Baronet was in error when he stated that Baltic timber was used in their construction. A question most intimately connected with that on which he had been detaining the House, was the colonial trade. On this point he would not feel it necessary to offer more than a very few observations. A petition had been presented last year by the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Hutt) from parties connected with the Colony of South Australia, praying that the import trade of

corn from that colony might be placed on a similar footing with that from other Colonies. The Motion which the hon. Member founded on that petition was opposed by the right hon. Baronet, though it was founded on precisely the same arguments on which the Government advocated the Canada Corn Bill. He (Mr. Liddell) felt the force of those arguments, and voted with the hon. Member for Gateshead. In order to show the present state of that Colony, he would beg to call the attention of the right hon. Baronet to a statement which had appeared in the newspapers a few days since. It appeared that for the five years from 1840 to 1844, the quantity of land under cultivation in South Australia had increased from 2,503 acres in 1840, to 26,900 in 1844. In 1843, which was the most remarkable season in that respect, the number of acres under cultivation was no less than 28,600 acres. Since that time shipments to England from South Australia were very much increased; but if land were thrown out of cultivation in Australia in consequence of the admission into England of grain from other countries, the shipments to England would decrease also. Again, if corn brought a lower price in England than it did at present, a great deal of land in England would also be thrown out of cultivation. It was hardly to be conceived that prices in this country would not be reduced *5s.* or *6s.*; and if the colonists of South Australia were not able to import corn into this country when the average duty on wheat was *5s.*, how were we to receive wheat from that Colony when there was a free importation from foreign countries? Under such circumstances what became of the argument by which hon. Members were induced, and indeed successfully, to give their support to the Canada Corn Bill? What would become of the shipping trade, after the trade between the Colonies and the mother country had ceased? The Canadians must then resort to the United States, and purchase from them such goods as the Americans could supply. This was one of the evils connected with the subject, from which it was impossible to escape. He had heard nothing in that House to reconcile him to the great change which must take place in respect to our colonial trade. With regard to the general question, he had been on one point extremely anxious to learn what was the real opinion of Her Majesty's Government as to the probable consequences of that measure. On that point he owned himself still unsatisfied. Perhaps in the progress of the present debate the right hon. Gentleman (Sir Robert Peel) would favour the House with some sort of calculation of what might be the average amount of prices which the farmers of this country might expect to receive under the operation of free trade. It was of the greatest importance that, in coming to arrangements with one's tenants, hon. Gentlemen should have some sort of guide given from high authority. He had heard indeed, but he paid little attention to the assertion, that the trade in corn would in future be liable to little fluctuation. Now, the present Corn Law had certainly succeeded, whether by accident or design he knew not, in securing steady prices for corn in the British market. On that point there could be no dispute; but his belief was, that if we depended in a greater degree on a foreign supply than we had done before, although in ordinary times and seasons there would be steadiness of price, yet that in extraordinary occasions, and in bad seasons, or in case of war with a foreign Power, there would be greater fluctuations in prices than had ever been known. He trusted that the noble Lord the Member for London, would not abandon altogether the principle of protection. It was true that the noble Lord was in some measure bound by the famous letter to his constituents; but if the noble Lord could in any way get out of that difficulty, he trusted that he would soon see reason to adhere to the principle of protection. Adverting to another point, he tendered his most hearty thanks to the hon. Member for Finsbury, for the humane and wise recommendations which he made at the end of his speech, notwithstanding the caustic, and he might say rather spicy, language in which they were conveyed. He admitted that the proposed new law of settlement would be a boon to the agricultural interest; but it was also much more—it was a boon to the country, and a boon to humanity. He had seen, and seen with sorrow, in times of commercial depression, miserable objects with their families wandering about on the highways, unable to ascertain where their settlement was; and in all cases where they belonged to Scotland and Ireland, knowing that when they arrived in their own country, they would be unable to claim anything in the shape of parochial relief, they were obliged to eke out a miserable subsistence by casual charity, and perhaps die by the road side. He trusted that no consideration would in-

duce the right hon. Baronet to lay aside that important part of his scheme, and that he would resolutely carry it through the House, since by so doing he would confer a great boon upon the people at large, and especially upon the working classes. He did not mean to say that after the declaration of the noble Lord the Member for London, and that of the right hon. Baronet, the present system of Corn Laws could be looked forward to as one likely to be permanent. So long, however, as he (Mr. Liddell) had a seat in that House, he would endeavour to maintain the principle of protection, though in a modified form, and he should therefore oppose, though without bitterness and without acrimony, the measures brought forward by the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. HUTT regretted that his hon. Friend (Mr. Liddell) should have enlisted his talents on the side of protection, which necessarily forced him to take the narrowest views of a question that ought to be contemplated in the broadest and most comprehensive manner. His hon. Friend had dwelt at considerable length upon the contents of a petition which he had presented from certain shipowners against the proposed reduction of duties on foreign timber. He (Mr. Hutt) had presented petitions of a very different tendency from a large body of shipowners of the Tyne and Wear, who were convinced that the measure proposed by the right hon. Baronet was calculated to do them great benefit. He would beg the House to notice what was the remedy suggested by his right hon. Friend to remedy what he considered to be a hardship on the British shipowners. Why, to maintain high duties on Prussian timber. That might be a satisfactory argument to the shipowners signing the petition which his hon. Friend presented; but it would be far from satisfactory to the great body of the shipowners of this country. The protective system had materially injured both the British and the colonial shipping. Relying upon this protection, the North American Colonies selected the worst description of timber for exportation to this country, whilst they sent their best timber to the United States. The only likelihood of the British shipowners getting good timber was by facilitating the importation of timber from the Baltic. He did trust that the House would take a more liberal view of this question than his hon. Friend had done, and that they would adopt the proposition of a diminished duty on Baltic timber. His hon. Friend had intimated his intention to discuss this question in Committee. He hoped his hon. Friend would do so, and then he should be extremely happy to meet his hon. Friend. Now, approaching the more immediate question before the House — that of the Corn Laws—he begged, in the first place, to disclaim any wish to touch upon the question of the political consistency of the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government. If the right hon. Baronet deserved all the censure that had been poured out upon him, those who thought so would do well to adopt the advice of the hon. Member for Finsbury (Mr. Duncombe), and bring the question substantially before the House as a Motion of censure. That would be far more regular, and more consonant with the practice of Parliament, than to mix up with a question of fundamental policy their party grievances and personalities. What was the worst charge that could be brought against the right hon. Baronet? Only this, that he was unwilling to retain those laws which had been proved to have been so long injurious to the industrial interests of the country. The country had had ample warning that these measures would inevitably become the policy of the British Government. In 1842 he attended a meeting at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he told those who were assembled, that if they expected to maintain a system of exclusion, they would find themselves bitterly deceived. There was every indication that the mind of the right hon. Gentleman was inclining towards free-trade principles. In 1841, when the discussion took place on the sugar duties, the opinions delivered by the right hon. Baronet were so tending in their nature to free trade, that the present Earl Grey, in answering the speech of the right hon. Gentleman, hailed the declarations then made by him as evidence favourable to free trade. So, measure after measure, and step after step, had the propositions of the right hon. Baronet been in the direction of free trade; and in all these instances hon. Gentlemen opposite (on the Ministerial benches) had given the right hon. Baronet their unqualified and ready support. They supported him in his Tariff of 1842, and they further supported him in his alterations of that Tariff in 1845; but now, when the right hon. Baronet had brought forward a measure in perfect consistency with the principles of all his former measures, hon. Gentlemen opposite

suddenly stopped short, opposed the right hon. Gentleman, and talked of treachery to his party. The hon. Gentlemen, the Members of the Cabinet that was to be hereafter, had, at their party dinners and protection meetings, maintained the doctrine that, if free trade were adopted, foreigners would give us their corn, but take nothing in return but our gold. This was always represented as a most alarming thing. It was said that by our purchasing their corn we should give employment to their labour, while they would give no employment to ours in return. But he (Mr. Hutt) denied in the first place that the foreigners would require us to give gold in exchange for their corn; but furthermore, in the second place, he would say, that even if they did, still the transaction would be advantageous to us. Gold was only an article of trade. To come to matter of fact, the only trade carried on by us for many years with China was precisely of that sort. We took China teas and China silk, and we paid for them in gold. A Committee was appointed in 1813 to inquire into the circumstances of the East India Company; and it appeared by the evidence then given, that although at that time their trade with India had been most unfortunate, still the Company had traded with China with success. Gold did not grow in England. It was obtained from the people of South America in exchange for our manufactures. It was his intention to give the measure of Her Majesty's Government his most hearty support.

Captain HARRIS said, to his mind the question very naturally had arisen, to whom was the present state of things to be attributed? Most assuredly to the unexpected conduct of the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government. In June last there was a division of 254 against 123, in opposition to the repeal of the Corn Laws; but then there was no indication of any change of opinion from the right hon. Baronet. The House rejected the Motion of the hon, Member for Stockport, by a majority of 213 to 121—neither was there then any indication of a change. The season passed on until August; but as to any change on the subject of the Corn Laws, there was not the slightest symptom, although there were serious apprehensions that a bad harvest would follow, from two of the summer months being extremely wet. Two months of dry weather having dissipated all serious apprehensions as regarded the harvest, matters proceeded in the usual way: not the remotest intimation of either a repeal or a modification of the Corn Laws. But the moment there was an alarm about the failure of the potato crop, then the subject began to be agitated. He did not mean to underrate the calamity with which Ireland in particular was visited. He looked upon it as a visitation which demanded the interference of Government. But it being only, as stated in the Speech from the Throne, a "temporary evil," it required for its mitigation or removal, but a temporary remedy. But he would ask Whig, Tory, and Radical—and he believed they all felt an interest for Ireland—whether the proposed remedy would benefit that country? Were the Corn Laws repealed to-morrow, would it place the Irish peasantry in a better condition than they were in at present? His firm conviction was the results would be to them most injurious, Ireland being an agricultural country. It would reduce the value of labour; it would throw numbers out of employment; and, consequently, place them in a worse condition. But suppose the failure in the potato crop was more general than reported to be, was that any argument for the sweeping measure proposed by the right hon. Baronet—was that a reason why there should be so great a change in the whole of that economy which governed the interests of the country? While he did not doubt the sincerity of the right hon. Baronet—while he was convinced on many occasions of his integrity and patriotism, yet he (Captain Harris) deprecated the manner in which the right hon. Baronet dealt with the great question before the House. He did not merely refer to the right hon. Baronet's conduct to those of that side of the House who formerly supported him, but he also referred to what was due from him as a Minister of the Crown to a British Parliament. He said so without one particle of hostility to the right hon. Baronet, who might be driven from power for conduct like the present—whose great career might be suddenly terminated, as the consequence of not acting in accordance with the feelings of the people. He ruled the country for some time with that spirit and with that energy becoming a great statesman; but the introduction of the measure before the House would be a drawback to his great celebrity. He would look to the bearing of this measure on the currency; and he believed its effects would be to neutralize the sound and able legislation of the right hon. Baronet on that subject. Their export

trade to the Dantzic in 1844 was 376,651*l.*; and the value of wheat imported from the Dantzic was 1,517,512*l.*; that was an excess of 1,100,000*l.* of bullion going out of the country: would not that disarrange the currency? The right hon. Baronet had said, that his measure would restore commerce to its natural and primitive state; but the question was, would foreign nations return to that primitive state of commerce? because if not, he apprehended that the advantage would be all on their side. It must be remembered that they gave up now every chance of successful negotiation with other countries; and he was afraid that they were incurring a great risk of losing their place in the scale of nations, for the sake of becoming the workshop and warehouse of the world. The hon. Gentleman the Vice President of the Board of Trade had said, that the approach to free trade had given a great development to our commerce: now, he took no ultra views on this subject, and admitted that that might be the tendency of such measures, always reserving a fair degree of protection to native industry; but the hon. Baronet had made especial reference to France, and he begged to remind him that our trade with France had been increased by a wise development of the resources of that country. Above all things the great injustice of this measure struck him; for whilst with all other things the right hon. Baronet proposed a reduction from twenty to ten, when he came to corn, he repealed the duty altogether at the end of three years. He was surprised that such a measure—so little in accordance with his usually cautious and prudent policy—should have emanated from the right hon. Baronet. Again, he hoped to have heard the right hon. Baronet rebuke those who had conducted the agitation on this subject, for their exciting language; and to have heard the noble Lord who introduced the Reform Bill into that House, rebuke them for tampering with the representation; but, now, on the contrary, he saw the right hon. Baronet and the noble Lord advance hand in hand with the hon. Member for Stockport, dancing like the witches in *Macbeth* round the precious mess they had cooked for the country. That debate had proved that they had honest and talented men on their side in that House; and their cause was graced by a noble Lord in another place, who had ever acted upon the dictates of his conscience and the impulse of a highly sensitive honour. He spoke with perfect sincerity, when on the hustings, in 1844, he declared his opinion in favour of the Corn Laws; he had not changed his opinion since; and he should, therefore, give his decided opposition to the measure of the Government.

Mr. MONCKTON MILNES said, that this was the second occasion, during a not very long Parliamentary experience, on which he had witnessed the great subject of the Corn Laws come under discussion, encumbered with all the difficulties and dangers of a party question. It was, however, impossible to imagine two occasions more different than those of 1841 and 1846. In the one, this question was agitated as the last hope of a falling party; in the other, it was brought forward as the cause of the destruction of a vigorous and a powerful one. In the one case, it was hardly possible to conceive any other principle upon which a Government could stand; in the other, it was hardly possible to imagine a cause from which a Government should fall. But the little experience he had had of Parliament, and of public life, had been quite sufficient to convince him that it was very difficult effectively to bring great questions before that House, whether of a commercial or other nature, without connecting them with some party motives with which to influence the public mind. We were a practical people, and not given to examine into abstract theory or truths by themselves; we were more inclined to give such matters a serious and earnest attention (and it was of some consequence to set a value on this disposition) when stimulated by the sense of party interests, or when suffering from temporary difficulties. It had been his object, on every occasion since he entered Parliament, to give hon. Gentlemen opposite the full benefit of his appeciation of their motives, even when they brought forward measures which he could not in themselves approve. In no case had he suffered his political feelings to blind his judgment in this respect. Therefore it would not be fair in him to deny the same just estimate of the motives of those with whom he had acted, faithfully and trustfully, for many years. He was not inclined to interpret the actions of Her Majesty's Government so harshly as some of his hon. Friends had done. He was disposed to consider much as unconscious bias, which they regarded as concerted treachery—much as accident, which they regarded as stratagem. And, indeed, considering the peculiar crisis of the laws under discussion, there was little reason to

press hardly on any statesman for changing or modifying his opinion on the subject. Though the hon. Member for Cumberland might maintain the same opinion he did in 1815, very few of those who had mingled practically in political life, had not in some degree modified their opinions. When they saw such singular instances as Lord Fitzwilliam supporting the high duty of 1815; and Lord Spencer, not content with Mr. Ricardo's proposal of a 10*s.* fixed duty in 1822, insisting on its being raised to 20*s.*; and Mr. Ricardo himself, who was thoroughly convinced, if any man in the country was, of the truth of the doctrines of free trade, recommending a 10*s.* fixed duty; they ought not to judge statesmen very hardly and harshly for modifying their opinions. But these peculiarities were not confined to one side of the question. He believed that the opinions of his hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme had undergone a modification in a different direction; and he was quite sure that his hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury, if he candidly declared the real state of his mind, would admit he had not always been so strong a protectionist as he was at present. Thus, considering the difficulties of the question, all possible allowance ought to be made for the men engaged in the government of the country. It was hardly for one like himself, totally inexperienced in such difficulties, to estimate the amount and the gravity of the considerations with which they had had to grapple. No one could have heard the right hon. Gentleman's earnest mode of describing his sense of responsibility, without feeling that every allowance should be made for the change in his opinions, from the purity of the motives which dictated it.

"O faciles dare summa Deos, eademque tueri
Difficiles."

The House would decide whether, under such circumstances as those under which the country was now placed, they were to allow a statesman to modify his opinions, or whether they would prefer to have the Government constantly changed from the hands of one party to those of another, and leave the country exposed to the inconvenience of all those changes. He was not, however, prepared to take the question in the light in which it had been placed before them by the President of the Board of Trade. He was not prepared to look at the measure before them—the measure proposed by Her Majesty's Government—as a legitimate deduction from their former propositions. He (Mr. Milnes) had always maintained, while allowing the right hon. Baronet's (Sir R. Peel's) helm to traverse as freely as he could wish, there were two questions which the present Government were nearly precluded from deciding. One was the secularization of the Irish Church, and the other the repeal of the Corn Laws. He thought those restrictions were imposed by honourable engagements entered upon at the time of the discussion of the Appropriation Clause, and at the election of 1841; and only within these limits Her Majesty's Government could be allowed freely to act. He felt this so deeply, that but for the circumstance of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government having resigned power, and of the noble Lord's refusing to accept it, he could not in any case have given his support to the Government; but would have preferred withdrawing from Parliament altogether. Nor could he take the view of the question which had been taken by the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool, and think that Members of that House were bound to follow, on this question, any guidance other than their own judgment. With respect to the influence of party obligations, he would say that the present state of the party to which he once belonged was such, that he did not see how these party obligations could any longer exist. He looked upon the Government of the right hon. Baronet as a Government *ad interim*, to carry out the measure which had been proposed to them. It was a Government which depended on the sufferance of its opponents—which hung upon their will; and if any sentiment weighed heavily on his mind, it was, that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had thrown away the opportunities for doing good which Providence had placed in his hands. He saw him at one time the leader of a powerful party, and he believed him capable of allaying animosity, suppressing intolerance, and leading to the greatest and most lasting improvements — performing many of those great services to the country which hon. Gentleman opposite were, perhaps, inclined to perform, but which they wanted either the power or the opportunity to accomplish. He had seen the fabric destroyed —he had seen the opportunity lost, and he deeply regretted it. Perhaps it was a vain regret, but he should not have done justice to his own feelings if he had not expressed it. He could not say that it was because he had any longer confidence in the right hon.

Baronet that he intended to give him his support on this occasion. He gave him his support because it was the only course which he could pursue, being desirous as he was to pursue the most consistent course practicable in the emergency; and however he might regret to find himself separated from many of those friends with whom he had so often acted, and who had so distinguished themselves during this debate—unwilling as he might be to vote differently from those friends with whom he was connected by such close ties of private friendship, yet he felt it necessary to support the right hon. Baronet; for he believed that on the conscientious vote of every man on this division depended the settlement of the question, whether or not we were to adhere to the doctrine of protection, not as laid down by the moderate and most prudent advocates of protection, but as maintained in all its integrity, by the Central Agricultural and other associations. Now, he had ever looked upon the Corn Law as a temporary arrangement, and the best, perhaps, for the purpose of educating the agriculture of this country to such a degree that it could compete with the foreigner; and when he saw how much had already been done—when he witnessed what he might call the miracles of physical agriculture which had developed themselves, and which showed that it was not a deficiency in our soil that had retarded our agriculture, he could not think otherwise than he did about a settlement of this question. When he looked at the increasing cheapness of drain tiles, and of other adjuncts to improvement, he thought it more just to suppose that the Corn Laws were approaching a termination, than that they should be permanently and in all their rigour retained. The principles which he on former occasions advocated, he could still maintain; and when the Bill was in Committee, he would hold no other line of conduct. He did not participate in the hopes which the warmest advocates of the measure entertained, no more than in the fears which were indulged in by those who opposed it. No one had satisfactorily shown him that abundance of corn on the banks of the Ukraine, or in the Valley of the Mississippi, necessarily involved abundance of food to the people of this country. There was surely an analogy between the produce of corn and manufactures; and they often saw that, while the warehouses of Manchester were stuffed with goods, the people of Ireland went cold and naked. He did not, therefore, hope, from the proposed change, the great relief that was expected. There would certainly be a loss somewhere in the change; and in his opinion it must be divided between the landlord, the farmer, and the labourer. It was maintained by hon. Friends of his, that a large proportion of that loss would fall on the labourers; but he did not think that at all proved. Hon Gentlemen had often asserted that they were perfectly convinced that wages would fall in proportion—the fall in the prices of which would be an injury to the labourer; but in his opinion the labourer in many parts of the country could not be worse off than he was at present. He did not know whether it was from seeing the produce of labour in foreign countries that he had imbibed the notion that there was a far greater equality between the prices of labour in England and on the Continent than was generally believed. There was something in the remuneration of labourers which political economy could hardly account for, but which depended on the physical capabilities of the labourers. He was told by gentlemen engaged in railroads on the Continent that they were ready to give to the English labourer half as much more as they would give to the French labourer, provided he would not get drunk. When he saw the Frenchman ploughing with his nightcap, and stopping every five minutes to talk to somebody, and singing if that somebody was not there to talk to—when he compared that to the hard work of the English ploughman, he did not see reason for that great fear that was entertained by his hon. Friends, with regard to the interests of the labourer. The labourer, he did believe, would not be the immediate sufferer in this case. He was sorry to say, that in many parts of England the labourer was already reduced to the minimum of subsistence, and his wages went below the possibility of reduction. He believed that if the hon. Member for Northampton looked to the county of Northampton, he would find —not perhaps in those parts of it to which he extended his benevolent influence — the labourer receiving from seven to nine shillings per week. Here at least they could not find it possible, under any form of Corn Laws, to reduce such wages; and when he came to the labourers in the north of England, where he lived, and where ten shillings was considered very scanty remuneration for work, he

thought that the advantage of the labourers was derived, not from the benevolence of their employers, but from their contiguity to the great manufacturing districts of this country. He believed it to be the tendency of the large manufactures already established, not only to improve the immediate neighbourhood by raising wages, but to affect a very large circle about them. He thought that the hon. Member for Knaresborough would find some difficulty in denying that the extension of manufactures in his neighbourhood, in the course of the last twenty years, had trebled the wages of labour in that district. He was of opinion that the real gist and difficulty of this question was, the effect which it would have on the small and impoverished farmers; and for that reason he would have called upon the right hon. Baronet to have been more moderate and slow in his change. They might tell him that that class was already reduced to the class of labourers, and even below it, by the consolidation of large farms and improved agriculture. That might be so; but here, by this Bill, they were possibly inflicting a very large amount of human misery, which all the benevolence and kindness; of the English landlords would not be able to meet. He had only to make one remark more: he alluded to the gross injustice done to the landlords by the leaders of the manufacturing interest, who had thrown in their teeth that this question was one of rent; forgetting that the rents of the landlords was a means of usefulness, and a means of supporting the poor around hem—that rent, too, was the interest of the landlord's capital, and was the same thing to him as that for which those hon. gentlemen, members of the League, were subscribing their half millions. The land of England was well known to be generally and considerably below its value; and he thought that one of the worst parts of this measure was that it held out to the landlords a great temptation to increase their rental; and this was one of the worst evils which it would lead to, and on which he was sure that the right hon. Baronet had not changed his opinions, which he expressed in such glowing terms some months ago. The landlords, though exposed to such a temptation, would overcome; but it was one that should not have been held out to them. If they only bore this temporary temptation with prudence, and showed themselves ready to employ that wealth which they were now spending in amusements and accomplishments, in the improvement of their estates—if they were ready to make the sacrifices which the present case demanded of them, he believed that all would go well. Possibly, many an old hall would be deserted—possibly, many painful feelings might be excited; but let them be only true to themselves; let them maintain all that was really good and useful, all that was really advantageous in their position, and although they might lose something as the ruling class, yet, notwithstanding that loss, he believed that they would maintain a powerful and prosperous condition in the community, and remain the chief element of peace and permanence amid the fluctuating fortunes of this extending Empire.

Debate again adjourned.

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HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES,

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*** It has seemed better, instead of incumbering this Index with a reference to Private Bills, upon which debate seldom occurs, to collect them in a table at the end of the Session, in form similar to the Paper issued by the House of Commons. The date will be a sufficient reference to the volume.

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ERRATA.

Page 85, line 22, 30, and 32, *for* Dr. Linley *read* Dr. Lindley.
Page 231, line 8 from bottom, *for* Mr. W. R. Collett *read* Mr. J. Collett.
Page 984, line 8 from bottom, *for* Lord C. Churchill *read* Lord A. S. Churchill.